

A History of Gamma Zeta Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-2003
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Kate Meehan Pedrotty
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This history was produced as part of the Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing's Greek Chapter History Project. The Society was founded in 1988, with the goal of preserving the historic buildings that embody the history of the nation's largest Greek system, and educating the public about the historical significance of fraternities and sororities on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Dues paid by member fraternity and sorority chapters and donations from chapter alumni fund the Society's work. In keeping with their mission, the Society began the Greek Chapter History Project in May 2000 in conjunction with the University of Illinois Archives. The GCHP aims for nothing less than producing a complete historical record of fraternities and sororities on the University of Illinois campus by employing a graduate assistant to research and write histories of campus chapters. Making the work possible are the extensive collections of the University of Illinois Archives, especially its Student Life and Culture Archival Program. Supported by an endowment from the Stewart S. Howe Foundation, the heart of the SLC Archives is the Stewart S. Howe collection, the world's largest collection of material related to fraternities and sororities.

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The National Organization

Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) was founded in Richmond, Virginia on September 11, 1864, the first Greek-letter college fraternity established in the United States after the Civil War. This fact was far from insignificant to Otis Allan Glazebrook, Alfred Marshall, and Erskine Mayo Ross, the fraternity's three founders, as they set out to consciously craft a brotherhood that could play a part in national healing following a conflict that had amounted to political, and sometimes literal, fratricide. As cadets at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, all of the founders served as soldiers in the Confederate army and had seen the horrors of the war firsthand. Their experiences contributed to their desire to create an institution which could encourage America's young men to once again live together "in peace and unity under the healing and transforming power of brotherhood and love."¹ The immediate post-Civil War period provided ample space for innovators like Glazebrook, Marshall, and Ross to pursue new fraternal organizations, because the fraternity system nationwide, but especially in the South, had been devastated by the war. As would occur again in the twentieth century during both World Wars, large numbers of fraternity men enlisted in both the Union and Confederate armies, draining a fraternity system that had previously consisted of twenty-six societies with almost four hundred chapters, including one hundred forty-two located in the South.² At the end of the war, none of the Southern chapters survived. The time was ripe for new beginnings.

After the end of the war, General Francis H. Smith was given the task of rebuilding the Virginia Military Institute, from which Alpha Tau Omega's founders all hailed. He was approached by a northern friend about the idea of reactivating some of the dormant Southern fraternity chapters, but rather than pursuing the matter himself he decided to pass the task along

¹ Claude T. Reno, *The ATO Story: The First Fifty Years* (1962), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

to Otis Glazebrook, who was currently courting his daughter Virginia. Glazebrook, who no doubt wanted to please his potential father-in-law, turned out to be an ideal choice for this task. He wrote the fraternity's first Constitution and Ritual and organized a "Founders' Meeting" with friends Alfred Marshall and Erskine Ross at his parents' home in Richmond, a meeting which incidentally was the *only* time that the three founders ever met together. At the gathering, Glazebrook read his proposal for the society and it was signed and ratified by the other two, after which all three were treated to the first ATO banquet, one of "Mother Glazebrook's...proverbially sumptuous repasts."³

Otis Glazebrook was a devout Christian who would go on to become an Episcopal priest, and his personal piety and spiritual vision is heavily imprinted on the purpose and values of the fraternity. ATO historian Claude T. Reno explains that Glazebrook's devotion to Christian ideals and ethics led him to deeply disapprove of Greek philosophy, ideology, morality, and mythology, so he set out to create a society that was "Greek in name only."⁴ In Glazebrook's vision, the true heart of the fraternity should reflect the conviction that Jesus Christ was the "beginning and the end of salvation" and that true peace and brotherhood (such as was hoped for in the reunited nation) could only be achieved under Christ's direction. It is perhaps not surprising, given these deeply-held beliefs, that the Greek letters Glazebrook chose for his new fraternity were also heavily infused with Christian meaning: the Alpha ("beginning") and the Omega ("end"), joined in the middle by the Tau cross.⁵ Reno points out that ATO's orientation toward Christian spirituality and ideals sets it apart from many other Greek organizations; while

³ Reno, 10-13.

⁴ Ibid., 7-9.

⁵ Ibid., 9. The basis for the Christian understanding of these Greek symbols is the Book of Revelation, in which the explication of the Alpha and the Omega as "beginning" and "end" occurs at least three times. In Revelation 22:13 (New International Version), for example, Jesus Christ says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

ATO teaches that “Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” for instance, the motto of Phi Beta Kappa is “Philosophy is the guide of life.”⁶

For many years this Christian identity proved very important to the fraternity on the level of ritual and rhetoric, although the extent to which its numerous undergraduate members put Christian principles into practice is notoriously difficult to assess. In 1941, ATO’s national leadership found it necessary to assert that non-Christians or non-believers could *not* be accepted into fraternity membership although no provision against non-believers had previously existed. Although the fraternity, and American society as a whole, was still a few years away from the multitude of issues that would arise to challenge restrictive laws and institutions, the necessity for this Christian membership clause must certainly have been prompted by some question or concern raised either outside or within the fraternity. *The ATO Story*, the fraternity’s multi-volume official history, is unfortunately silent on this matter.⁷ As later portions of this chapter history will demonstrate, Gamma Zeta chapter at the University of Illinois should be credited with a return to the original principles envisioned by Glazebrook, both in terms of spirituality and of true brotherhood. In the late 1990s a small but committed group of men in the Gamma Zeta house launched Christian fellowship and Bible study programs in an effort to re-infuse fraternity life with spiritual purpose, an effort which also coincided with the chapter’s goal to more fully understand and utilize the fraternity’s ritual. By this time, Gamma Zeta chapter (along with all other ATO chapters) had long since dropped the restrictive membership clauses that had once allowed only white Christians to gain membership, and the chapter was proud to report that it included Asian-American, African-American, and Arab-American members

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Harry L. Biro, *The ATO Story: On to the Centennial* (1968), 33-34.

representing a variety of faith traditions.⁸ The invitations to Bible study, though likely to appeal only to Christians, took special care to stress that the events were non-denominational and open to all interested or simply curious brothers. Although Glazebrook and earlier ATO leaders may not have approved of the decision to open ATO membership to those who did not share their specific faith traditions, their vision of young men “living together in peace and unity under the healing and transforming power of brotherhood and love” arguably found expression not only in Gamma Zeta chapter’s Bible study but also in its eventual cultural and religious diversity.

ATO’s earliest years in the late 1860s and 1870s were certainly not very “diverse,” but the fraternity was small and would soon grow beyond its Southern roots just as its founders had hoped. When VMI re-opened on October 16, 1865, Glazebrook and Marshall quickly began initiating new members to reach their desired chapter roll of twelve, and soon afterward they established an ATO chapter at neighboring Washington College in Lexington, today Washington and Lee University. Several other chapters followed, all of them located in the South. The fraternity’s first national Congress was held in 1870, a significant milestone, but from 1871-1876 its growth was slower and the health of many established chapters was in jeopardy, largely due to the economic and social strains put on Southern society during Reconstruction. Out of twenty-two established chapters by 1876, only seven managed to survive to the opening of a new decade. Despite this decline, however, the 1880s would prove to be a time of resurgence for ATO: in 1880 the first issue of the fraternity’s magazine, *The Palm*, was published, and in 1881 the group prepared to “invade the North” (in historian Claude Reno’s words) and initiated its first northern member, Nathaniel Wiley Thomas, at the University of Pennsylvania. Thomas

⁸ “Scuffle at UI Leads to Racism Protest,” *Daily Illini*, c. 1990s, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

initiated five other men a few days later to form Pennsylvania Tau and would go on to found several other Northern chapters, prompting Glazebrook to dub him “the Saint Paul of ATO.”⁹

After a period of expansion lasting from this “Northern invasion” in 1881 through the early 1890s, ATO entered what Claude Reno termed the “conservative” period, under the direction of Otis Glazebrook’s son Larkin W. Glazebrook as the fraternity’s Grand Chief. One of the hallmarks of the conservative period was a general slowdown in new chapter installations. It was during this period, however, that Illinois Gamma Zeta was installed at the University of Illinois by Dr. Elias P. Lyon, William G. Atwood, and Everett A. Thornton, all members of ATO’s Chicago Alumni Association.¹⁰ As one of the last ATO chapters founded in the nineteenth century, Gamma Zeta would prove itself robust, resilient, and ultimately respected into the twenty-first. Gamma Zeta’s first initiate, Thomas Arkle Clark, would go on to become Worthy Grand Chief of the fraternity and the namesake of its highest individual undergraduate award. Several other alumni followed in his footsteps to hold national offices, and the undergraduate chapter, though experiencing the normal ups and downs of any fraternity, could usually be persuaded to strive for renewed excellence based on references to its illustrious previous history and the strong example of its fraternal ancestors at the University of Illinois.

As has been demonstrated with the story of Gamma Zeta’s Bible study and membership diversity in the late 1990s, the history that follows presents a fascinating look at not only the life of a single fraternity but also the evolution of American college society over more than a century. The lived experiences of the men of Gamma Zeta illuminate the ways in which the specific institutions and values of the fraternity were often challenged by conditions and social forces existing in the “outside” world. Gamma Zeta actives and alumni constantly sought to assert their

⁹ Reno, 41-88. This appellation, referring to the Christian saint celebrated as one of the earliest missionaries and evangelists, would have of course seemed quite appropriate to the religious Glazebrook.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 141-144.

relevance and validity but, when necessary and with courage, also made important changes to their institutions and values in order to preserve ATO's ideals of "love and brotherhood" in their purest form. Their success in evolving while remaining true to the principles envisioned by founders Glazebrook, Marshall, and Ross has led to the more than one hundred years of history examined in these pages.

1892-1899: Gamma Zeta's Beginnings

The desire for a chapter of Alpha Tau Omega on the University of Illinois campus preceded Gamma Zeta's founding by at least three years, and this movement seems to have manifested itself very soon after the University's ban on fraternities, originally handed down in 1882 under Regent Selim H. Peabody, was lifted in 1891.¹¹ In the winter of 1892, Illinois undergraduates Wesley E. King, John H. Strawn, Clarence O. Pitney, Mark Hay, and Henry W. Grieme met at King's residence in Champaign and discussed the possibility of founding a chapter of ATO at the University. Mark Hay, who had a friend in Chicago with ATO connections, was instructed to write a letter inquiring about setting this process in motion. Hay did so, but the friend's very sound advice – "found a local organization, apply for a charter" – was apparently ignored for several years. Nothing more was accomplished toward this end until the summer of 1894, when Mark Hay and Charles Noble, a new addition to the original "interest group," were both in Chicago on duty with the National Guard during the Pullman Strike.¹²

¹¹ Jon Coit, "University of Illinois Greek System History" (2001), 4.

¹² Also known as the "Debs Strike" after American labor leader Eugene V. Debs. In 1894, Debs' American Railway Union (ARU) struck along with several thousand Pullman workers in the largest "sympathy strike" in American history. Pullman workers protested a cut in wages that occurred after the economic panic of 1893, but Pullman Palace Car Company executives refused to meet with them and also did not correspondingly lower rents in their company town. The strike was eventually broken up by United State Marshals and over 12,000 United States Army troops, and Debs served six months in an Illinois jail for violating an injunction against the strike. See the "Illinois During the Gilded Age" digital history project at <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/gildedage/> and "Pullman Strike" at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pullman_Strike

During their time in the city Hay and Noble contacted W.G. Atwood, an alumnus of ATO's Beta Theta chapter at Cornell, and gathered more specific information about the procedures for starting a chapter at Illinois. When they returned to school in the fall, Hay and Noble gathered a "nucleus" of nine students and began to hold meetings in rooms occupied by Noble and Paul W. Newcomer. The group kept in close contact with its alumni mentors in Chicago and by December received the news that a charter had been granted for their new ATO chapter. At this point the men felt confident in moving to "real" rooms in which they could hold their meetings and social events, and soon rented the second floor of a building at 305 North Neil Street in Champaign, over what was then Harris' Candy Store.¹³ The "nucleus" had held, and Gamma Zeta chapter was born.

Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega was formally installed on March 21, 1895 by W.G. Atwood (Beta Theta – Cornell), Elias P. Lyon (Beta Kappa – Hillsdale), and E.A. Thornton (Alpha Theta – Emory). These three men made an "inspection tour" of the University of Illinois campus prior to the installation, which has held in the chapter rooms on Neil Street. A "History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega," produced by the chapter in the 1920s, reports that the alumni installers first initiated a "selected candidate" and acquainted him with the ritual so that he could initiate the others.¹⁴ Although this "selected candidate" is not named, it was almost certainly Thomas Arkle Clark, who is listed as "No. 1" on Gamma Zeta's chapter roll and would serve as both the literal and figurative "father" of the chapter for years to come. Clark was also selected as toastmaster for the installation banquet held immediately after the ceremony at Carter House, on Walnut Street just south of Main in downtown Champaign. The history

¹³ All sources are located in the University of Illinois Archives, unless otherwise noted. ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

¹⁴ "History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-1922," ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

reported, “He is willing to have it said that he was frightened silly and that he performed his task very poorly,” an expression of modesty that should almost certainly be taken with a grain of salt.¹⁵ By all accounts the banquet was a smashing success, and surviving photographs of the event show a heavily-laden table surrounded by young men in several variations of late nineteenth-century formal dress. A description of the evening from the 1920s history provides a rather amusing glimpse into the evening, and survives as proof that some fraternity traditions perhaps have very deep roots: “...champagne there was on the bill of fare in abundance – in too great abundance in fact, if the truth must be told, as the duty of every honest historian requires, and some very sad gastronomic results followed. But it was a good dinner and it brought a new experience to some of the brothers.”¹⁶

Following a practice not uncommon in fraternities of the time, two members of the University of Illinois faculty, Thomas Arkle Clark and Nathan Austin Weston, were among the first initiates of Gamma Zeta chapter. Clark was a professor in the English Department at the time of his initiation while Weston hailed from Economics. Both would go on to hold even higher offices, Weston becoming Dean of the School of Commerce, and Clark eventually serving as Dean of the College of Literature and Art, Dean of Undergraduates, and Dean of Men, the first person to serve in this capacity at an American university. As Dean of Men, Clark was a tireless champion for fraternities, because he believed that they had an integral role to play in developing young men into solid leaders and good citizens as well as the ability to facilitate a healthy campus atmosphere. Clark realized that there were dangers inherent in the fraternity system as well, and often spoke of the need to combat the kind of hyper-exclusive tendencies that had alarmed university officials in the 1880s. At the 1909 ATO National Congress in Pittsburgh,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-1922”

Clark delivered the Congress Oration, a speech entitled “Democracy in College.” In this address he “...called for a restoration of equality among students, the abandonment of clannishness and snobbery, participation in general college activities, a sense of community welfare...,” and asserted that fraternities like ATO had to take the lead in this process.¹⁷ One of Clark’s most firmly-held beliefs was that fraternities (and sororities) had to encourage their members to get involved in campus politics and social activities, so that the Greek system never stood completely apart from general campus life. It is also obvious from his rhetoric that he fully expected Greeks to *lead* these activities by virtue of their superior organization and, perhaps, overall character. Clark, himself a graduate of the University of Illinois, had worked his way from a farm in Minonk to and through the university, where he served as editor of the *Illini* newspaper, president of the Literary Society, and was active in his church.¹⁸ While he had certainly fared well as an individual, when he was later given the opportunity to join a brotherhood like ATO he jumped at the chance and became one of the fraternity’s most devoted and most active members. It is possible that Clark believed that his own college years, though very successful, had lacked the brotherhood and fellowship that he later came to assert only recognized fraternities could provide. This conviction might have led to his enthusiastic support of his “new” brotherhood, Alpha Tau Omega.

By all accounts, the brothers of the new chapter dove quickly into action. In April, less than a month after the chapter was formally installed, Charles Noble wrote to James Green, ATO’s Worthy Grand Keeper of the Annals, and informed him that there was “much talk here of building a chapter house.” He asked for advice in procuring designs and estimates for the cost of

¹⁷ Reno, 193. Clark further outlined his position on fraternities and their role in college life in his book *The Fraternity and the College* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, 1915).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

such a project.¹⁹ Most fraternity members were then rooming together at the Kerns boarding house on University Avenue, and later in the year many moved to the Gamble House at 117 West Park. Members would continue to live in these locations throughout the 1890s. Although Gamma Zeta maintained “official” chapter rooms in downtown Champaign, and moved to better rooms in September 1895, most of the planning and socializing actually took place in these boarding houses. When they gathered in their rooms or in the parlors of their landlords, the brothers were effectively organizing a chapter house and forming close bonds, although still on a very unofficial level.²⁰ The brothers had begun to organize in other ways as well, grouping themselves into small teams to “look after” certain areas of the chapter’s life, including social events, athletics, and campus politics. At this time it was considered very bad form for an aspiring campus politician to promote himself or “electioneer” for an office, so anyone aspiring to political life had to have a “team.” As Thomas Arkle Clark had hoped, the fraternity proved an excellent organizing body for such activities and Gamma Zeta members reported some early successes in varsity athletics, publishing, and the Annual Prize Oratorical Contest.²¹ The chapter also started holding social events, although with not very much money at its disposal these occasions were small and rather plain. One of the chapter’s first dances was described in the 1920s history as “primitive” yet “a good dance.”²² In May 1895, just a few short months into its existence, Gamma Zeta chapter submitted its first Annual Report and proudly informed the national organization that the chapter was “practically clear of debt” and expected to “possess a

¹⁹ Charles Noble to James Green, April 19, 1895, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²⁰ “History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-1922”

²¹ 1897 Annual Report of Gamma Zeta Chapter of ATO, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²² “History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-1922”

full set of paraphernalia in the fall term.” Brothers from the chapter were active in athletics, publishing, and military activities at the University.²³

Over the next few years Gamma Zeta chapter continued to grow, although they also lost one of the original founders, Mark Hay, when he was expelled from the fraternity on February 1, 1896 for “misconduct.”²⁴ Although the exact nature of this “misconduct” is never spelled out in detail in the chapter archival records, Mark Hay’s official ATO Member’s Record perhaps gives some clues as to his general demeanor and character. Either Hay himself, or someone who knew him, took the liberty of filling in the normally-typewritten record in pencil and provided some unexpected answers to the biographical questions. Hay’s record reports that his father was a member of the “Frat Rat Club” and his mother of the “KAT Club,” that he attended a preparatory school called “Danville Hotties,” and that his course of study in college was “Sex.”²⁵ Although it seems unlikely that Hay would have been expelled for merely this sophomoric prank, it is probable that some of the chapter’s members (Thomas Arkle Clark comes immediately to mind) might have been less than impressed with his comportment in other areas and decided that their chapter would be better off without him.

Of course, other members of the fraternity exited throughout these years as well, some through “natural” means such as graduation but many others for financial or business reasons. The annual reports from Gamma Zeta chapter’s early years reveal a chapter membership that was much more fluid than in the later parts of the twentieth century, when it was much less common for men to have to leave college due to lack of money or job opportunities that proved too good to pass up. As a result of this fluidity, the chapter constantly worked to recruit new men, often

²³ 1895 Annual Report of Gamma Zeta Chapter of ATO, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁴ 1896 Annual Report of Gamma Zeta Chapter of ATO, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵ Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Member’s Record: Mark Hay, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

inviting several potential members over to their chapter rooms on weekend nights and entertaining them in as grand a style as they could manage.²⁶ There is evidence that as the chapter grew in number and correspondingly grew more financially stable, this style became much more “grand” than in the days of the “primitive” dance. A newspaper article entitled “The Happy Greeks,” unidentified and undated except to say that the events it describes “celebrated the fourth anniversary of the chapter’s installation” (1899), offers a glowing report on a banquet at the Hotel Beardsley, a dance at Miebach’s Hall, and a “smoker” on the next evening, enjoyed by many members of Gamma Zeta chapter and their dates. The dance, which began just before midnight, lasted until just before daybreak when the last carriages left for home. The article proclaimed the two-day celebration, “without doubt, of its kind, the most successful event ever given by the fraternities . . . throughout the program there was not a hitch of any description, everything passing off with perfect smoothness.”²⁷ Looking past the obvious boosterism evident in this article, which was likely written by a Gamma Zeta member, the description illustrates that the chapter had successfully established itself as a fixture of campus life at the University of Illinois in the span of a few years, and had given itself a strong base from which to build.

Gamma Zeta’s last Annual Report of the nineteenth century, submitted in June of 1899, provides further evidence of its solidity. The chapter consisted of sixteen actives and three pledges, most of whom now lived together in the Hessel Apartments at 208 West Church Street. Eugene Burke served as assistant editor of the *Illini* and manager of the varsity track team, and Donald Bailey had been elected as sophomore class president for the upcoming Fall 1899 term. Gamma Zeta reported that its financial standing was fairly good – “we are practically out of debt” – and that the chapter’s greatest wish was to have a chapter house in the near future. The

²⁶ Charles Clark to Thomas Ruffin (Worthy Grand Keeper of Annals for ATO), September 23, 1897, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²⁷ “The Happy Greeks,” c. 1899, ATO Chapter Files, 41/95/1, Box 48.

Hessell Apartments were more than a mile from campus and in a location from which transportation was often uncertain, especially in inclement weather. This issue, combined with a general desire for a comfortable and convenient meeting place for the entire chapter, would continue to fuel the push for chapter house construction into Gamma Zeta's next decade. The process of financing, building, and maintaining this house consumed the energies of the chapter's actives and alumni for the next several years, but the work they had done in the 1890s put the chapter in an excellent position for this large undertaking.

1900-1910: Building for the Future

In the summer of 1900, Gamma Zeta chapter took one of the first steps toward solving their housing problem by renting a house at 505 East Green Street, just two blocks from the University. The brothers moved in when school began in the fall, and while the house represented a definite improvement in terms of location, it was not very well-suited to functioning as a chapter house. The 1920s history reported that it "had rooms of the most curious shape and of the most unheard of arrangement," so while the brothers enjoyed being able to gather as a chapter, the quest for a real chapter house continued.²⁸ Several of the other fraternities existing on campus at the time were beginning to build chapter houses, so ATO recognized that they would be compelled to join the trend if they expected to compete for the "best" men.

The fundamental basis of any large construction project is financial, and Gamma Zeta's active and alumni members certainly recognized this fact. Wesley King, a founding member of the chapter and now an interested alumnus, was the first to work out a system of chapter house notes as funding for the construction of a new chapter house. In the spring of 1901 he persuaded

²⁸ "History of Illinois Gamma Zeta of Alpha Tau Omega, 1895-1922"

twenty-three other alumni to sign these notes, which were worth \$10 each for ten years. Later, all new initiates to the chapter were also asked to sign these notes in order to contribute to the future prosperity of the organization they were joining. Dwight F. Haussler was reportedly the first man to pay his note, which he sent from Germany in a fifty-mark money order that cashed in for \$11.20. King's fundraising efforts stretched over the next three years, as he worked to drum up more participation among the actives and alumni. In the spring of 1904, King and other prominent alumni felt that there was enough support to move the project one step further, and organized a House Corporation to shepherd the complicated process of purchasing a lot, selecting an architect and contractors, and financing the entire undertaking. The first meeting of the House Corporation took place on March 16, 1904, and Walter Mueller was elected President, Wesley King took up the post of Secretary, and Thomas Arkle Clark became Treasurer. King had obtained a contract to purchase two lots at 405 East John Street in Champaign from D.H. Stolty for \$3000, but he transferred the contract to the newly-formed House Corporation and the group voted its approval of the purchase at the first meeting.²⁹ The rest of the spring and summer of 1904 passed rather quietly on the house front, consumed primarily with study and research into the best way to proceed with all the plans. At the last meeting of the year, on December 29, the Corporation decided that it would sell bonds up to the amount of \$17,000 to finance the rest of the payments that would be needed for both the land and the eventual construction of the house.³⁰ Despite this resolution, no more concrete action was taken toward the chapter house construction until almost one year later. By early 1906, however, activity began again in earnest and Gamma Zeta was very close to realizing its dream of a comfortable gathering place for actives and alumni alike.

²⁹ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, March 16, 1904, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164

³⁰ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, December 29, 1904, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

Beginning in February 1906, the House Corporation held meetings at least monthly and the minutes of these meetings report exciting developments. On February 5, C.H. Blackall of Boston (a graduate of the University of Illinois) was engaged as architect, and on March 12 the Corporation approved a “Colonial front” for the house in accordance with Blackall’s suggestions. On April 28 the Corporation’s Finance Committee under A.D. Mulliken was authorized to secure a loan of \$12,000 from the Chicago Savings Bank to finance construction, and at the same meeting a decision was made to let the construction contract to A.W. Stoolman, whose bid of \$17,187 was the lowest received. By May 23, a contract had been signed with Stoolman for the lower amount of \$15,234, which excluded fees, heating, plumbing, and electrical fixtures, many of which would be handled by other contractors.³¹ Construction on the house started soon after this contract was signed and continued through the summer, when it must have progressed extraordinarily well judging from the absence of any exasperated correspondence dealing with construction delays or financial disputes. In fact, the 1920s history reports that by September the house was “practically ready for occupancy,” although a few more months’ worth of work still remained. One pressing problem not necessarily related to construction was furniture, as all the men involved with the house project agreed that the furniture from the rented house on Green Street and from the chapter’s current downtown Champaign rooms was not suitable for the new house. There was not, however, much money in the budget allotted specifically for furniture, so the House Corporation appealed to the alumni and many came to the rescue with earmarked “furniture” contributions. This was perhaps the first time, but by no means the last, that this “emergency” tactic was used to encourage alumni giving to Gamma Zeta in order to improve or repair its physical structure. Most alumni recognized the requests as sincere efforts to protect

³¹ Minutes of House Corporation Meetings, February – May 1906, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

and strengthen the chapter's investment in its most valuable possession, but throughout the years some expressed their annoyance at "constantly being asked for money," and successful fundraising campaigns had to deftly negotiate these attitudes.

In 1906, however, the fraternity was still new and all evidence points to very enthusiastic support for the house project (in theory if not in practice, as the next few years demonstrate). The house was ready for a grand dedication and housewarming in November, and the chapter printed a program advertising the schedule for the four-day celebration to all active and alumni members. This schedule, infused with visions of male camaraderie of the time, is worth reproducing in its entirety:

"Wednesday: Approaching forces march on 405 John Street. Capitulation of the tribe. Triumphant march of victors. Tour of the premises.

Thursday: Scouting parties to Alma Mater and other points. Burying of the hatchet in the fatted calf, said calf and trimmings to be devoured at 6:30pm with Thanksgiving. Destruction of tobacco, several pipes apiece.

Friday: Campfires; with chestnuts raked out by many brothers, 4:30pm; Grand pow wow and dedication of the big wigwam, 6:30pm; Love feast, with heap talk. More smoke.

Saturday: Grand hunt. Bringing in the game. Putting away the dead ones."³²

The housewarming weekend was certainly a time for "Thanksgiving" and was appropriately coordinated with this holiday, allowing a large crowd of active and alumni members the chance to see the fruits of more than five years of hard work on the part of some Gamma Zeta brothers. These men were working even in the midst of the celebration when they held a House Corporation meeting on November 30. During the meeting the members learned that an additional loan of \$3,000 had been secured from William B. McKinley (a United States Senator and Congressman from Illinois who was of no relation to the twenty-fifth President of the United

³² Housewarming Program, November 28, 1906, ATO Chapter Files, 41/95/1, Box 48.

States), and that ninety-three of Gamma Zeta's one hundred twenty-four members had aided the house construction effort with either donations or house notes, many of which were already paid in full. Wesley King proudly announced that Gamma Zeta "now owned a home which would last for no less than one hundred years."³³ His calculations could not, perhaps, account for the growth that the fraternity would experience in the next few decades, but the sentiment of King's statement is clear: Gamma Zeta was now firmly established as a reputable and leading fraternity on the University of Illinois campus, and its new chapter house served as the most potent symbol of this permanence.

After the glow of achievement in 1906, the final years of the twentieth century's first decade proved frustrating for Gamma Zeta leaders in a number of ways, not the least of which was the realization that the agreement to purchase a house note did not always translate into a willingness or ability to pay it. This problem was not confined to the immediate aftermath of the house construction era and in fact stretched on for years, a time period which must have seemed interminable to the House Corporation members whose thankless task it was to cajole, hound, and threaten their fellow brothers for payment. First Wesley King and then A.D. Mulliken found themselves in this role, and while they tried to remain understanding about the various personal and financial challenges facing Gamma Zeta brothers after they left the University, their correspondence from 1909 and 1910 occasionally reveals their frustration. For example, in September of 1909, William Prettyman responded to a general payment request from Mulliken with a letter stating that he could neither pay his notes nor explain the circumstances. Mulliken responded with exasperation in a later letter, reminding Prettyman that he was an attorney and

³³ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, November 30, 1906, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

that the notes were only \$10 apiece!³⁴ In several other letters from this time period, Mulliken complained of having to advance over \$1000 of his own money in order to meet mortgage payments on the house, illustrating some of the costs of leadership.³⁵

The undergraduate members of Gamma Zeta also found themselves frustrated with alumni during this time period, while they continued to move ahead as an active chapter. In the spring of 1910 the chapter was happy to report to the alumni that, as a group, they had “succeeded quite well” on exams and had “no outright flunkers,” and that they were continuing to enhance the new chapter house by painting some of their rooms. This same letter, however, hints at a general apathy among alumni toward life in the active chapter, evidenced most plainly by the fact that a specially-planned Alumni Reunion at the house has been called off due to lack of interest from the alumni. Worthy Master (President) J.W. Thomsen wrote that “this apparent lack of interest on the part of the Alumni, in an affair planned for them, has somewhat disappointed the chapter. Other fraternities seem to be successful in holding reunions and their (sic) is no reason why Alpha Tau Omega should not be successful, if alumni would do their part.”³⁶ The alumni had also not come through on a special request posed to them by Thomas Arkle Clark, who had written in January 1910 asking for donations to the newly refurbished library at the chapter house, especially issues of ATO’s magazine, *The Palm*.³⁷ The undergraduate members were left feeling understandably shunned by their alumni during this period, but the actives continued to reach out to alumni during the succeeding decades and there were periods of very good active-alumni relations interspersed with periods of decline. This pattern would be repeated over the entire course of the fraternity’s history and was certainly not

³⁴ William Prettyman to A.D. Mulliken, September 21, 1909, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

³⁵ A.D. Mulliken to Frank Byers, September 13, 1909, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

³⁶ J.W. Thomsen to Alumni, March 3, 1910, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

³⁷ Thomas Arkle Clark to Alumni, January 25, 1910, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

unique to Gamma Zeta chapter or to Alpha Tau Omega. Gamma Zeta was fortunate, however, to have a consistent supply of dedicated alumni who continued to look out for the chapter's financial and organizational well-being, even if they were at times operating largely as individuals and not as the chosen representatives of a uniformly enthusiastic and involved alumni base. From 1900 to 1910, it was men like Wesley King, A.D. Mulliken, and Thomas Arkle Clark who allowed Gamma Zeta to firmly establish itself as a fixture on the Illinois campus and in its Greek system, symbolized most strikingly by the chapter's beautiful brick Colonial on John Street. The next decade of the chapter's life would bring new challenges, including a worldwide military conflict, but now Gamma Zeta had a true "home" in which to join forces and meet them.

1911-1919: A Growing Fraternity

The active chapter appears to have moved very aggressively to address the alumni relations issues of previous years, and beginning around 1912 the undergraduates' primary weapon against this apathy was a glut of communication. Until 1915, when the chapter newsletter *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* first appeared, the undergraduates relied on written communication in the form of frequent letters to fill alumni in on activities in the chapter. These letters, usually penned by the chapter's Worthy Master, or President, contained news of rushing (the undergraduates frequently asked for recommendations and sent information blanks to facilitate the process), initiation (in 1913 the chapter was once again able to host a banquet following this event), athletics (the 1912 varsity baseball team included two Alpha Taus, Thomas and Waddel), and scholarship (the chapter placed third out of twenty-one houses in the spring of

1914).³⁸ The picture that emerges from these letters is one of an active and growing fraternity, and this image was upheld even by impartial observers. ATO's national organization sent its Province Chiefs to evaluate individual chapters annually, and in 1913 F.R. Bott had largely positive things to say about Gamma Zeta, while noting that the chapter "develops the normal number of failures, which seem at times larger than necessary, owing to their larger chapter."³⁹ The undergraduates certainly viewed their growing size as an asset (in 1913 they boasted twenty-two actives and fourteen pledges) rather than a detriment, and their letters to alumni illustrate their pride in the various activities and accomplishments of Gamma Zeta brothers.

These missives were also used to invite alumni to events at the chapter house, and in this decade Homecoming, a new celebration at the University, was especially advertised. In 1912, Worthy Master Stanley Pogue urged alumni to attend the Homecoming football game against Chicago and then to visit the chapter house for socializing with the actives, reporting that ATO would be involved in an informal competition with other fraternities to see who could get the most alumni back during the weekend.⁴⁰ From its inception, alumni did show up for Homecoming in larger numbers than for any other event, especially when, as in 1914, they could cheer on Gamma Zeta members such as Pogue and Squire on the field. There seem to have been some complaints, however, that the other Homecoming activities organized by the chapter were "too dull," and in one letter Worthy Master Stanley Pogue appeals to the alumni for suggestions to liven things up.⁴¹ By the middle of the decade a fairly well-established Homecoming routine was in place, which featured a buffet luncheon prior to the football game and an evening set

³⁸ Stanley Pogue to Alumni, May 25, 1912; R.B. Bronson to Alumni, August 12, 1912; R.A. Hunter to Alumni, February 22, 1913; Stanley Pogue to Alumni, May 19, 1913; Stanley Pogue to Alumni, October 10, 1913; R.E. Thomas to Alumni, October 14, 1914, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

³⁹ "Close of School Year 1913" by F.R. Bott, ATO Chapter Condition and Standing Reports, 1913-1932, Record Series 41/95/3, Box 1.

⁴⁰ Stanley Pogue to Alumni, October 9, 1912, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁴¹ R.E. Thomas to Alumni, October 14, 1914; Stanley Pogue to Alumni, May 19, 1913, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

aside for a smoker and toasts. At 1916's "big talk fest" during Homecoming, "three o'clock in the morning saw almost as large a crowd in the living room around the fire as had the earlier part of the evening."⁴² Homecoming, it seems, may have been just the shot in the arm that active-alumni relations at Gamma Zeta needed after a few rocky years.

Unfortunately for the alumni, the chapter's financial worries did not disappear with the new decade, for the mortgage on the chapter house still had to be paid on a regular basis and funds were also needed for the occasional and inevitable repair. In the winter of both 1913 and 1916 the furnace at the chapter house failed, leaving the undergraduates shivering in their rooms or forced to bunk with other fraternities for a period of time. On both occasions, Thomas Arkle Clark made a special plea to alumni for emergency funds, but also reminded those "delinquent brothers" who still owed on their house notes that their money would be much appreciated. After the 1916 breakdown, which unfortunately exposed the necessity to replace the furnace entirely at a cost of \$400, Clark sent a postcard to all Gamma Zeta brothers with the following exhortation: "If you have notes overdue, please pay them now – If your notes are all paid or not yet due, it would be generous of you to send something any way – If you have never paid anything or helped the house in any way, this is your time to loosen up."⁴³ Once the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* began publication in the fall of 1915, Clark regularly used a feature called "The Dean's Own Page" to list the names of both those who had paid their house notes on time and those who were still in arrears.⁴⁴ The *Quarterly* seemed to be, at least in Clark's mind, a powerful tool for inciting guilt in those who were delinquent through public shaming, but House

⁴² Volume 1, No. 2 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, January 15, 1916, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁴³ R.A. Hunter to Alumni, February 22, 1913; T.A. Clark to Alumni, February 7, 1916, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁴⁴ Volume 2, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, November 3, 1916, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Corporation correspondence from this period indicates that the officers faced ongoing problems in collecting house note payments as they came due. In March of 1915 Thomas Arkle Clark wrote to A.D. Mulliken, informing him that the chapter was in fairly bad financial shape and was presently \$800 behind on the rent.⁴⁵ Over the summer of 1915, the House Corporation took steps to avert a full-blown financial crisis, arranging with the Danville Building Association to extend the loan and to apply the withdrawal value of loan stock on the principal in order to scale it down to \$9400. This action had the effect of reducing the monthly dues to \$101.84, a manageable amount.⁴⁶

In the fall of 1915 a new form of communication was introduced to Gamma Zeta members by way of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* newsletter, and the publication would soon grow into not only a vital link between all the brothers but a source of real pride for the chapter, as it would go on to win numerous communication and publication awards from ATO's national organization. The inaugural issue appeared in October 1915 and reported that the fall Rush season had turned out excellently for Gamma Zeta after an initially slow start, and the chapter was particularly proud to have snatched two "top" men away from especially stiff competition, including Beta Theta Pi, Phi Kappa Psi, Kappa Sigma, Sigma Chi, and Phi Delta Theta. When Louie King went to inform the losing fraternities of ATO's success, the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* gleefully reported, he "got nothing but grouchy congratulations for his pains."⁴⁷ In the next issue, alumni might have been interested to read about a "New Plan for Freshmen" recently instituted by the chapter, after several years in which the old system of "browbeating" had been very unsatisfactory. In the past, freshman pledges had been "trained" by individual upper-classmen

⁴⁵ T.A. Clark to A.D. Mulliken, March 5, 1915, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, July 21, 1915 and May 26, 1916, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁴⁷ Volume 1, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, October 16, 1915, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

“advisors” who did not have a unified approach to this activity, resulting in some predictably uneven treatment across the board. The chapter had decided to replace this system by appointing a single advisor for all pledges, who met with them both individually and in groups, and so far everyone was pleased with the results. The freshmen apparently felt that they were now “treated fairly,” and the upperclassmen were satisfied that the pledges had displayed “no inclination to take advantage of their liberties.” One unique and somewhat amusing aspect of this new “plan” involved pinning encouraging notes above the pledges’ desks as constant motivation, some of which contained wisdom such as: “Everybody likes you. Otherwise you would not be here,” “STUDY HARD. There is no other way to fool the University,” and “Remember that there is more to being a good fraternity man than acquiring the art of occupying a big chair gracefully.”⁴⁸

The *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* emerges as a useful historical source for this period in the fraternity’s life not only because of the information that made it into print but also for what seems to have been left out. As the decade progressed, the absent information primarily related to the war that was raging in Europe but did not yet involve the United States, although by early 1917 the chapter’s news source showed signs that both the fraternity’s and the nation’s disengagement with the conflict was quickly dissolving. The February 1917 issue of the *Quarterly* contained, for the first time, letters from Gamma Zeta members and alumni who had volunteered for various European armed forces and were currently fighting overseas. The newsletter also reported that students at the University of Illinois had been busy raising money for Belgian relief and for the Red Cross, while still finding time to enjoy the usual rounds of dances and parties sponsored by fraternities such as Alpha Tau Omega. And Thomas Arkle Clark, ever keeping a watchful eye on the fraternity’s finances, used the imminent threat of war

⁴⁸ Volume 1, No. 2 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, January 15, 1916, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

to plead with the delinquent brothers to pay their house notes. He reasoned, correctly, that a declaration of war by the United States would quickly drain Gamma Zeta's active membership, leaving fewer men to pay house bills and putting the chapter in an even more precarious financial situation.⁴⁹

After years of "neutrality" that clearly favored the Allied cause, the United States finally declared war on Germany in April of 1917. Young men around the country immediately began enlisting, some of them from the University of Illinois and Gamma Zeta chapter, but fraternity life did not grind to an immediate halt. In May Gamma Zeta's brothers still found time to host their "annual orgy" (presumably a dance!) during which they "squeezed themselves into their open-face suits and entertained the fairest females of the United States and surrounding islands..."⁵⁰ The House Corporation, however, was perhaps more attuned to the challenges facing the fraternity in the months ahead and called an emergency meeting on May 25, after A.D. Mulliken warned his colleagues that the University had talked about closing some of its departments, a decision which might strand some students and make it difficult for the chapter to continue paying its loan.⁵¹ During the emergency meeting, the House Corporation members passed a resolution authorizing its officers to "act in the interest of all" in the event that the chapter house was closed due to all of its active members being called to military service *or* in the event that the President of the Corporation was unavailable for the same reason. The officers' powers included the right to "renew or refund any encumbrance on said property, or to sell and convey the same on such terms, conditions and for such considerations as they may

⁴⁹ Volume 3, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, February 1, 1917, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁵⁰ Volume 3, No. 3 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, May 3, 1917, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁵¹ A.D. Mulliken to Charles P. Hunter, May 17, 1917, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

deem advisable or expedient.”⁵² This resolution obviously reflects the House Corporation’s deep apprehension regarding the possible effects that the war might have on the chapter, as is evidenced by the fact that they did not preclude the possibility of needing to sell the chapter house that they had worked so hard to build. Their fears are understandable, given that by May more than 2,000 students had been taken out of the University for active military duty. In the summer issue of the *Quarterly*, Thomas Arkle Clark issued a call to arms of a different sort, soberly predicting that, “Whether we have a good year or a year of failure will depend largely upon the way in which each alumnus and each active member comes to the help of the chapter now.”⁵³

The remainder of 1917 and the spring of 1918 proceeded with little incident for Gamma Zeta, although the chapter continued to lose members to military service and everyone’s belts had to be tightened somewhat. Fourteen active members had returned to school in the Fall of 1917 and they were soon joined by fifteen pledges who got involved in the usual athletic, publishing, and campus political activities. Homecoming was a necessarily smaller affair in 1917, but the brothers who attended held a smoker and euchre tournament at the chapter house and, as a sign of the times, enjoyed a military drill before the football game.⁵⁴ The chapter even managed to hold a few dances during the 1917-1918 academic year, including one in May 1918 with the best orchestra in town and girls who, according to the anonymous author of the *Quarterly* write-up, “all agreed it was a great night, I mean a great dance!”⁵⁵ By August 1918, however, the university’s and the fraternity’s relationship to the United States’ war effort had

⁵² Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, May 25, 1917, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁵³ Volume 2, No. 4 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, June 1, 1917 (issues appear to have been mis-numbered), ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁵⁴ Volume 3, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, November 1, 1917, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁵⁵ Volume 3, No. 4 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, May 15, 1918, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

undergone a rather dramatic transformation. In August the federal government initiated the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) at American universities in order to prepare college men for military service while allowing them to stay in school, and one of the provisions of the program was that fraternities needed to “exist quietly.” Since Gamma Zeta expected no more than ten undergraduates back on campus in the fall of 1918, this stipulation would likely not have been hard to meet, but the chapter’s cooperation with all SATC provisions was guaranteed when Thomas Arkle Clark was appointed Chairman of the SATC Committee for the University of Illinois. Clark’s position meant that Gamma Zeta members were among the first to be hauled off to hospital detail when an influenza epidemic struck Champaign-Urbana in October (1,500 undergraduates were eventually ill and fifteen died), but it also allowed them to continue with something approaching “normal” chapter operations. As SATC administrator, Clark decreed that fraternities could continue to operate but should curtail all “social” functions for the duration of the war. Soon after the institution of SATC on campus, ATO and many other fraternities were compelled to move out of their houses and rent them to the University as barracks. Gamma Zeta received \$250 per month from the University for their house, but in the midst of Rush the brothers had to move all the furniture out of their house, find another one, and move in there. They still managed to secure nine new freshmen, and Dean Clark offered his own house as the site for the initiation and banquet, which was held almost immediately due to the “uncertainty” facing the school year. One of the pledges, John Lawder, was a talented piano player and was given the task of entertaining the brothers during the times when they formerly might have been squiring girls in their open-face suits.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Volume 4, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, November 9, 1918, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

In the end, the men of Gamma Zeta only had to content themselves with pledge piano recitals and a rented house for a very short period of time. It is likely that some alumni received their November 1918 issue of the *Quarterly* after the armistice on November 11th, and by December 18 SATC had disbanded. After the Christmas vacation Gamma Zeta was allowed to re-occupy its house, and the University paid to have it repaired after the “rough treatment” it had received from the student soldiers-in-training. A total of eighty-three Gamma Zeta members were enlisted in active service during World War I, and only one – Heinie Bloebaum, Class of 1914 – lost his life, dying of influenza while in training at Camp McArthur. The nineteen Gamma Zeta men who reunited on campus in the spring of 1919 must certainly have reflected on how fortunate the chapter was to have emerged from the war experience relatively unscathed, although they were still waiting for more of their members to be discharged from military service and join them back in college life. Thanks to the efforts of Thomas Arkle Clark, Gene Burke, and Trelo King, the chapter house was actually in better shape than ever after \$3000 worth of improvements, including a new roof, new beds and mattresses, refinished floors, new lighting, and even a lock to keep mice and rats out of the storeroom!⁵⁷ Gamma Zeta members continued to trickle back to the United States and eventually to the University of Illinois over the summer of 1919, and by the fall semester the chapter again had a robust membership of thirty-four active and seven pledges. The biggest campus event that fall was Homecoming, which was billed as “a two-day festival...bound to thrill every man who gets within hearing distance of it.” The impulse to celebrate both the end of the war and a return to collegiate normalcy is evident in the program,

⁵⁷ Volume 4, No. 2 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, February 22, 1919, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

which included a carnival, a victory celebration, all-day musical entertainment and hospitality in the Illini Union, and of course the football game against Chicago.⁵⁸

Gamma Zeta had its own, personal reason to celebrate at the end of the decade when Thomas Arkle Clark was elected as Worthy Grand Chief of Alpha Tau Omega in 1918. Clark was the first of four Gamma Zetas to hold the fraternity's highest office, and he actually held it twice. After serving his first term and resigning in 1923, Clark was re-elected in 1929 and served until 1931, just one year before his death at the age of seventy. He was also named the fraternity's first Educational Adviser in 1928, in recognition of his lifelong commitment to university scholarship and his particular interest in fostering high scholastic standards in fraternities.⁵⁹ Clark's leadership on both the local and the national level provided a strong example for Gamma Zeta members for many years to come.

The 1920s: Growing Out Of John Street

One of the first editions of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* in the new decade contained the news that the active brothers had planted a memorial tree for Brother Heinie Bloebaum '14, one of one hundred seventy-three trees planted around the parade ground to honor the Illini war dead.⁶⁰ This tree was a fitting tribute to the only Gamma Zeta member who lost his life in World War I and also an appropriate symbol for the decade to come, in which the fraternity would continue to prosper and grow. In fact, it would grow so much that by the end of the 1920s plans for a new, larger chapter house were underway. In the meantime, the Gamma Zeta brothers

⁵⁸ Volume 5, No. 1 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, October 25, 1919, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁵⁹ Thomas Arkle Clark Memorial Portrait Unveiling Ceremony Program, 1942, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 47.

⁶⁰ Volume 5, No. 3 of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, May 24, 1920, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

continued to build their reputation as one of the leading fraternities at the University through their involvement in campus activities and especially athletics. Archival records demonstrate that chapter scholarship became an area of increasing concern, not only to Gamma Zeta but also to the national organization and the University. More than ever before, fraternities were required to document and report their grade point averages and to take steps to remedy academic failings. Like many other fraternities, Gamma Zeta's experience scholastic record resembled a roller coaster, with periods of both high and low achievement. The alumni, led by strong personalities such as Thomas Arkle Clark, Stewart Daniels, and Sidney Fithian, remained active in chapter affairs (especially in the House Corporation) and served as encouraging and occasionally admonishing figures for the undergraduate members.

Gamma Zeta members proudly reported on their campus activities throughout the 1920s, and there is evidence that the fraternity had managed to orchestrate the kind of "political" leadership that Thomas Arkle Clark envisioned when he became a champion of fraternities in the early twentieth century. When its members were running for various campus positions – ranging from the Homecoming committee to athletic manager spots to class offices – they could rely on substantial support across campus. The April 1923 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* explained that ATO had assembled a coalition of "about thirty other fraternities, about fifteen sororities, and a larger share of non-fraternity and non-sorority vote." This combination, which certainly encompassed a wide span of the student population, had so far been "unbeatable" and seemed "strong enough to hold together for some time."⁶¹ The November 1924 issue of the *Quarterly* contained evidence of this successful "political machine," reporting that Paul Hammaker, the current Worthy Master, was serving as Football Manager and was a member of

⁶¹ April 1923 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* (no volume or issue number listed), ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

the Commerce Club, Gamma Sigma (a Commerce honorary society), and Ma-Wan-Da. Another brother was Editor-in-Chief of the *Daily Illini*, and a third had been elected as Junior Class President and served on the Student Council.⁶² In a 1926 issue of the *Quarterly*, Doug “Dodo” Arrick was honored as an especially effective campus politician whose campaigning techniques had resulted in several victories, both for himself and for those that he chose to assist. His upcoming graduation in June was lamented as a huge loss for the chapter in the campus political arena.⁶³ Toward the end of the decade individual chapter members were very involved in activities such as drama, fencing, Glee Club, and *Siren* (a humor magazine), illustrating a wide range of interests and talents that seemed to be encouraged by the chapter as a whole.

No activity seemed to capture the entire chapter’s attention quite like athletics, however, and in the 1920s ATO had already begun to establish its reputation as one of the most athletically-gifted and fiercely competitive fraternity houses on the University of Illinois campus. This reputation engendered a fair amount of jealousy over the years, as several amusing stories demonstrate. In 1923, the house basketball team was the victim of several nefarious tricks from opponents (at least from the ATO perspective!), such as when a rival team managed to get their game with Gamma Zeta changed to a day directly after vacation, thereby beating a presumably rusty ATO squad. In the same season, the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* reported, another team “got peeved when we beat them by one point” and retaliated by purposely forfeiting a game to Phi Sigma Kappa, the team that was tied with ATO for first place in the division. In the ensuing playoff to determine the champion, Phi Sigma Kappa won.⁶⁴ The chapter bounced back from these misfortunes to win the basketball division championship in 1924, and individual members were active in track and fencing. Those brothers who did not directly participate in athletics

⁶² November 1924 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁶³ “Easter” 1926 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁶⁴ April 1923 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

themselves were certainly fans of both the house teams and the University varsity squads. ATO, like most organizations on campus, donated money to the Memorial Stadium construction effort and watched progress on the football venue with great interest (it was completed in 1923). Football continued to be a draw for chapter alumni as well, and even the business-oriented House Corporation correspondence from the 1920s often ends with predictions of victory for Red Grange and the rest of the Illini football squad.⁶⁵ Football seemed to be such a draw, in fact, that the active chapter often felt that the alumni cared only about the game and little about socializing with actives during events like Homecoming. In November 1924, Worthy Master Paul Hammaker used the *Quarterly* to express the active chapter's dissatisfaction with the direction that this yearly event had taken, noting that it had become "...little more than a good chance to drink liquor, your own or somebody else's, and a dandy opportunity to see a good football game. After the game everybody hurried out of town so they would be at home in time to take Sunday morning breakfast in bed as usual."⁶⁶ There is evidence of this attitude in a 1923 letter from alumnus Roy Kroeschell, who wrote to the chapter requesting four tickets for the Homecoming game (for a grand total of \$10!) but mentioned that he would not stay for the banquet afterwards.⁶⁷ Tensions between the active chapter and alumni were a constant factor of fraternity life, and usually seem to have arisen from differing expectations on the part of both groups, such as in this case. In the 1920s, however, there seem to have been no major disruptions between the two primary Gamma Zeta constituencies, and both actives and alumni agreed that the chapter was in generally fine condition.

⁶⁵ April 1923 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*; "Easter" 1926 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*; Stewart Daniels to Thomas Garth, October 23, 1925, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48-49.

⁶⁶ November 1924 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁶⁷ Roy Kroeschell to H. Lyman Cushing, September 28, 1923, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

Thomas Arkle Clark and other fraternity supporters often sought to counter critics by asserting that fraternities were not rowdy, bawdy associations encouraging sophomoric pranks but instead laboratories engaged in the process of shaping the men of tomorrow, teaching them essential skills for success in business and personal relationships. One of the skills and values instilled in this laboratory, they insisted, was responsibility – responsibility for one’s own intellectual development and general reputation, and responsibility toward the property and dignity of others. While fraternities certainly provided the structure within which responsibility in these forms could be taught, correspondence and other archival material from the 1920s illustrates that Gamma Zeta’s leaders often struggled to remind both active and alumni members of how to put it into practice. For the active undergraduates, the most frequent struggle occurred in scholarship. After several very good years in the previous decade, the chapter’s scholastic standing among University of Illinois fraternities began to slip somewhat and as a general rule fluctuated wildly. The November 1927 issue of the *Quarterly*, after reporting a disappointing drop in scholarship from 7th to 31st in just one semester, published a five-year overview of chapter scholarship, during which the chapter had been ranked 15th, 13th, 35th, 49th (the low-water mark), 10th, and 14th.⁶⁸ This news must have been particularly distressing to concerned alumni due to a much more optimistic outlook from the previous year, when Worthy Master Theodore Doescher wrote in the Easter 1926 edition of the *Quarterly* that the chapter had “rededicated” itself to scholarship and had three freshmen in the house who were surely “headed for Phi Beta Kappa.”⁶⁹ Doescher asserted that this rededication was designed to allow each member of the fraternity to definitively answer the question, “What are you going to college for?” The correct

⁶⁸ November 1927 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁶⁹ Easter 1926 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

answer was, presumably, to get an education and to devote oneself to scholarship before turning to more “recreational” activities.

As the chapter grew larger it became admittedly much more difficult to police scholarship and other activities, but there were some early controls put in place. In an ATO Chapter Condition and Standing Report from 1924, Gamma Zeta reported that it tried to encourage good scholarship among its members by awarding a special cup to the most improved student and by enforcing “laws” to keep delinquent students in their rooms at night.⁷⁰ In 1927, the national organization of ATO published a new edition of *Reno’s Manual* and in conjunction with this project asked each chapter to fill out a questionnaire about its practices in the areas of scholarship, ritual, publishing, and social events, among others. Gamma Zeta reported that pledges were required to study five nights per week and reinforced that they could be confined to the house even on the weekends if their work was judged to be severely delinquent. Actives who were not doing well were often “admonished before the chapter alter [sic] by the Worthy Master.”⁷¹ These measures appear to have had some effect by 1929, when the chapter was happy to report that its scholastic standing on campus had jumped from 52nd to 11th (out of sixty-eight fraternities).⁷² Although most of the pressure for improving grades in the 1920s seems to have originated from within the active chapter itself, there was undoubtedly concern and encouragement in the alumni ranks as well, particularly with Dean Thomas Arkle Clark remaining closely involved. The thorny issue of scholarship and fraternity life, and the way that the two often imperfectly intersected, would continue to be an issue for Gamma Zeta chapter.

⁷⁰ ATO Chapter Condition and Standing Report, April 24, 1924, Chapter Condition and Standing Reports, 1913-1932, Record Series 41/95/3, Box 1.

⁷¹ 1927 National Headquarters Questionnaire, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁷² Volume 1, No. 5 of *The Gamma Zeta* (a new incarnation of the *Quarterly*), ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

The chapter house itself presented a host of “responsibility” issues to both active and alumni members, and these concerns often dominated the page of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly* and *The Gamma Zeta*, the original newsletter’s successor after 1929. In a 1923 issue, a short article entitled “Take Care of Your Home” was clearly directed at the undergraduates currently inhabiting the chapter house, asking them rhetorically why it was that “...the great big ‘he-men’ of the chapter always pick the rooms with the delicate furniture to stage their boxing bouts and wrestling matches? Why do our sedentary brethren insist on throwing ashes on the floors and carpets?” The explanations given in the anonymous article range from “irresponsibility,” to “laziness” to assumptions such as “it’s none of my business” and “the freshmen will fix it.”⁷³ Complaints about the physical condition of the chapter house and the abuse heaped on it by active members are also a constant in Gamma Zeta’s history, as generations of actives matured into generations of alumni who had clearly absorbed some sense of the personal responsibility that Thomas Arkle Clark hoped the fraternity would teach, even if they themselves had been wrestling “he-men” during their time as actives!

Once Gamma Zeta members reached the alumni stage, their relationship to the chapter house changed. They became occasional visitors rather than permanent residents, and their stewardship toward the house was conceived of in primarily financial terms. Correspondence from the 1920s reveals that their sense of responsibility, however, was assumed to be unchanged, and that this responsibility should manifest itself in the prompt payment of their house notes and other outstanding fraternity bills. As in previous years, however, many brothers were either unable or unwilling to settle their debts, often leaving the House Corporation and the entire fraternity in a precarious position. In the early 1920s, Franklin Scott was Treasurer of the House Corporation and took over the duty of writing to brothers whose house notes were delinquent,

⁷³ April 1923 edition of the *Gamma Zeta Quarterly*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

reminding them that the Corporation had to pay taxes and make almost continual improvements to the house – in 1925, the immediate need was new fire escapes. Stewart Daniels took over from Scott in this same year, and one of his first actions as Treasurer was to send out a series of letters bringing “Christmas cheer,” his euphemism for what was actually an “aggressive campaign” to collect overdue house notes.⁷⁴ In some cases, such as with a J. Mounts who owed the fraternity \$110.91, the House Corporation turned to the services of collection agencies and legal professionals. The Mounts case never yielded any results, as the only information that a collection agency was able to obtain on the man was that he was reportedly “traveling with Sousa’s band.”⁷⁵ Both Scott’s and Daniels’ letters from this era make good use of the theme of “fraternal responsibility” as a motivation for paying house notes, and Scott even threatened to renew an old T.A. Clark tactic by publishing the names of delinquent brothers in the newsletter. One alumnus was unimpressed by this prospect and asserted that there was no way for him to pay his note, “publish or no publish.”⁷⁶ In 1926 Stewart Daniels and alumnus Morgan Buford jointly lamented over the situation with Buford’s brother Shelby, also a Gamma Zeta alumnus, who had neglected to pay his house notes despite making an annual salary of more than \$7,000 and having just married the daughter of a multi-millionaire. Buford, who provided this information on his brother to Daniels, promised to give Shelby grief about this situation since there seemed to be no financial impediments to his closing the matter promptly.⁷⁷

Annoyances such as these must have surely been in the House Corporation members’ minds as they prepared to embark on yet another new building project toward the end of the 1920s, but by the summer of 1926 almost all interested alumni agreed that the Gamma Zeta

⁷⁴ Franklin Scott to Franklin Roth, March 14, 1925, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁷⁵ Letter to William E. Gilmore, April 19, 1926, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/91/1, Box 48.

⁷⁶ Series of March 17, 1925 letters, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁷⁷ Morgan Buford to Stewart Daniels, May 24, 1926, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

chapter house on John Street had grown too small for the chapter's needs. At a meeting on June 5, 1926, the House Corporation authorized a committee to look into the possibility of purchasing new land on which to build a larger house.⁷⁸ By the next June, the committee had arranged to purchase a lot for \$5,800.00 on Second Street in the Fairland Place addition to Champaign, directly between the Deke and Chi Psi houses.⁷⁹ This location, however, did not last for long, as the Corporation decided to trade in the Fairland Place lot for a larger one in the New Gallivan addition in Urbana, a transaction that was completed in the summer of 1928.⁸⁰ Therefore, after three summers of preparatory work, by the fall of 1928 the House Corporation and the chapter as a whole was prepared to jump into the new building project in earnest.

The first order of business, after purchasing the land for the new chapter house, was to find a buyer for the existing house on John Street. After several months of negotiations with both a local Presbyterian church and a smaller fraternity, Sigma Mu Sigma, the chapter concluded a deal with the latter organization to buy the land, chapter house, and selected furnishings for \$55,000. The contract was signed with the Alumni Association of Eta Chapter of Sigma Mu Sigma on June 17, 1929. A letter from the House Corporation to E.I. Burke at Citizens State Bank in Champaign explained the terms of the sale, including that the difference between the purchase price (\$55,000) and the loan obtained by Sigma Mu Sigma (\$39,000) would be carried by the Gamma Zeta House Corporation as a second mortgage, payable within ten years.⁸¹ With this sale, Gamma Zeta moved into an exciting era of new growth but also a precarious financial one, as the chapter decided to make the move only a few months prior to the stock market crash that prefaced the Great Depression. Over the next decade, the financial

⁷⁸ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, June 5, 1926, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, June 2, 1927, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, June 7, 1928, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁸¹ House Corporation to E.I. Burke, June 7, 1929, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

position of the chapter grew increasingly complex and many of the House Corporation members, including most prominently Thomas Arkle Clark, found it necessary to place their own security on the line for the future good of the chapter. In December of 1929, Clark borrowed \$35,000 from the Danville Building Association in order to partially pay for Gamma Zeta's new lot in Urbana, modeling the kind of real-world "responsibility" that his fraternity system sought to teach its undergraduate members.⁸² This loan would be a source of anxiety to the House Corporation for many years to come, and when times were especially tight the Corporation appealed to all Gamma Zeta members – both active and alumni - to match the responsibility and fraternity loyalty demonstrated by Clark. In the lean 1930s, however, this challenge proved especially difficult to meet.

The 1930s: 1101 Pennsylvania Avenue

Gamma Zeta alumni who experienced the lean years of the 1930s would likely look back on them as some of the most challenging yet most rewarding that the fraternity has ever faced. By the end of the decade the chapter was firmly installed in its new chapter house, this one likely to last for the one hundred years originally predicted for the house on John Street. The process leading to the new house on Pennsylvania Avenue, however, was fraught with tension and financial complexities that tested the resolve of even the most dedicated actives and alumni. In the midst of a nation-wide economic depression, the men of Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega managed to secure their future and provide strong roots for the continued growth of their organization. Both building for the future and preserving the past seem to have been of great importance to the fraternity in the 1930s, as the chapter saved money to buy a movie camera to

⁸² Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, December 16, 1929, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

begin recording events such as initiations, Founders' Day, formals, and athletic contests. In January 1930 the active chapter asked alumni for help in purchasing a projector so that this invaluable Gamma Zeta "history" could be easily enjoyed on a regular basis.⁸³ Although these 1930s films do not survive in the University of Illinois archives, the project clearly indicates a desire to preserve chapter history for future generations of Gamma Zetas, generations that the men of the 1930s hoped would appreciate their efforts to build a financially stable and widely-respected fraternity at the University of Illinois.

In November of 1929, Charles Harris of Danville had been chosen as the architect for the new chapter house. The new house was to repeat many of the Colonial design elements of the original chapter house on John Street, but was to be substantially larger in order to accommodate the growing fraternity. On April 7, 1930, Stewart Daniels was informed that the University District Building and Loan Association had awarded the chapter a loan of \$50,000 to finance the construction of the new chapter house, and one day later Charles Harris wrote to Daniels with the bids for the house. English Brothers, with the lowest bid at \$73,989, was awarded the construction contract, and the local firms of Apperson Brothers (heating), Square Deal (plumbing), and Standard Electric (wiring) rounded out the contracting team.⁸⁴ After some small delays involving financing and contractual details, English Brothers began construction in the summer of 1930. In July, the House Corporation secured an additional \$65,000 loan from the Danville Building Association, and during the fall House Corporation meetings decisions were made to purchase new furniture for the house from Carson Pirie Scott Co. of Chicago and to

⁸³ Movie camera project is first mentioned in the April 1929 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* (Volume 1, No. 4) and the call for a projector emerges in Volume 2, No. 4 in January 1930, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁸⁴ C.C. Burford to Stewart Daniels, April 7, 1930; Charles Harris to Stewart Daniels, April 8, 1930; ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48; Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, May 21, 1930, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

contract with Joseph Kaszab, also in Chicago, for cabinetry.⁸⁵ This early correspondence is notable for its enthusiasm and optimism; as the different pieces of the chapter house project fell into place and Gamma Zeta moved closer to inhabiting its grand new home, the alumni steering the endeavor felt a palpable excitement.

Although the House Corporation had originally hoped that the new chapter house would be completed by the fall of 1930, finishing work continued into the next year. In February 1931, Gamma Zeta Worthy Master Oscar Ogg, Jr. wrote to Claude Reno, ATO's Worthy Grand Chief, and reported that the chapter house was "still quite unfinished." Ogg hoped, however, that Reno would pay the chapter a visit once the new guest room was in order.⁸⁶ In the end, the Homecoming weekend in fall 1931 was set aside as "Homecoming and house-warming rolled into one," and the active chapter promised to plan "Good Times, Not Long Talks" for the returning alumni who were eager to see the house. Instead of formal ceremonies, the chapter planned house tours, a buffet luncheon before the football game, and a very casual banquet in the evening.⁸⁷ When the Homecoming weekend arrived, the active chapter hosted a small but enthusiastic crowd of sixty alumni, their numbers reduced due to both the ongoing Depression and a lackluster Illini football squad. Gamma Zeta alumni were happy to cheer on active member Eddie Schalk on the gridiron, however, and also enjoyed the chapter's entry in the Homecoming Stunt Show, "Sleepy Time Down South," which won second place. Giving some evidence of the sorry state of the 1931 Illinois football squad, the Christmas issue of *The Gamma Zeta* noted that Schalk provided one of the highlights of the year with a 47-yard touchdown run

⁸⁵ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, October 5, 1930 and December 4, 1930, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 164.

⁸⁶ Oscar Ogg, Jr. to Claude Reno, February 11, 1931, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁸⁷ Volume 3, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1931, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

against Wisconsin, “one of the few scores the Illini team made against Big Ten competition this year.”⁸⁸

By early 1932, it was apparent – to members of the House Corporation at least – that Gamma Zeta chapter had far bigger things to worry about than an anemic Illini offense. On March 14, the Danville Building Association wrote to Stewart Daniels to inform him that the loan on the *old* chapter house (still held in Thomas Arkle Clark’s name) was in arrears and had been so since at least the previous November. The Association demanded immediate information on the situation and action to rectify it. Although Daniels replied to the loan officer that this particular loan had been taken over by Sigma Mu Sigma when they bought the John Street house from Alpha Tau Omega, he also acknowledged that the former group, being a very small fraternity, was currently experiencing severe financial difficulties and might not be able to fulfill the requirements of the loan. The crux of the situation was that Gamma Zeta, and in particular Dean Clark and his wife, would still be held liable for the loan if Sigma Mu Sigma defaulted.⁸⁹ In light of this pending crisis, the House Corporation formed an “Emergency Committee” composed of R. F. Hunter, Fred Dick, E.L. Simmons, Paul Snyder, and L.B. King. This committee was granted “dictatorial powers” and was charged with advising the chapter and keeping close watch on its financial affairs. Its primary objective was protecting Dean Clark and his wife from any “embarrassment or financial loss” connected with their signatures on the mortgages on both the John Street and Pennsylvania Avenue houses, and in connection with this objective the Corporation signed a bond guaranteeing protection to the Clarks.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Christmas 1931 issue of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁸⁹ Danville Building Association to Stewart Daniels, March 14, 1932; Stewart Daniels to Danville Building Association, March 16, 1932, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the House Corporation Meeting, June 5, 1932, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

For the next six years, the men of the “Emergency Committee” and the members of the chapter at large dealt with the issues resulting from the complex web of loans and real estate deals that had been required to bring the new chapter house into being in the early part of the decade. An exhaustive catalog of these individual issues is not necessary to illustrate the course of these difficult years, which generally followed a pattern of trickle-down threats: every so often the Danville Building Association would demand payment on its loan and threaten foreclosure, at which point Gamma Zeta chapter would threaten Sigma Mu Sigma with repossession, and Sigma Mu Sigma would either pay minimal amounts toward their debt or find some way to forestall the inevitable with refinancing. In the meantime, Gamma Zeta chapter continued to have problems with other creditors, notably Carson Pirie Scott and Joseph Kaszab. The chapter’s dealings with both of these firms dragged on for years, with the Kaszab account finally settled in 1935 and the Carson Pirie Scott bill in 1937, both of them for far less than the originally-contracted amount.⁹¹ Finally, in the spring of 1938, the Danville Building Association apparently reached the end of its patience with Gamma Zeta chapter and Sigma Mu Sigma and demanded immediate payment on the loan, in cash. If the cash was not produced in a timely manner, the Association threatened eviction and foreclosure. Although these kinds of threats had been made before, the House Corporation records make it clear that there was something more serious about this particular incident, something that made the Corporation and its officers spring into action as never before.

On May 16, 1938, concerned alumni called a meeting at the chapter house with the active chapter to discuss the serious situation with the Danville Building Association. A dinner was followed by a presentation by Frank Scott, who announced the launch of a major fundraising

⁹¹ Various correspondence on the Kaszab account is found in the House Corporation Correspondence files; Carson Pirie Scott to Gamma Zeta Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega, January 30, 1937, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

campaign in the name of Thomas Arkle Clark, who had died in 1934. The goal of the campaign was to once and for all free the Clark estate, especially Mrs. Clark, from any financial responsibility for the ATO property and to clear the fraternity's account with the Danville Building Association. The campaign that Scott proposed would raise \$20,000 by July 1 and would rename the Gamma Zeta chapter house after Clark, as a lasting memorial to him and his work for the fraternity. Those present at the meeting must have been sufficiently inspired by Scott's words and the memory of Dean Clark, because by the end of the evening the active members had pledged \$4,000 as a "nucleus" for the campaign, and the alumni present had added pledges of \$6,000. Two days later, Scott attended a dinner and smoker in Chicago to drum up more alumni support for the campaign, and at the end of May all alumni received a letter urging them to honor "our greatest Brother in the best possible way" by securing the future of the house and keeping his widow from financial ruin.⁹² By June 16 around \$24,000 had been pledged toward the campaign, and the fraternity was able to meet the cash payment demanded on July 1. More importantly, there was money left over to put toward a lasting fund for the house so that emergencies such as this one could be avoided in the future.⁹³ Clark's wife Alice was very touched by the campaign to memorialize her husband, and wrote to Frank Scott to say that he "...would not have asked for a better monument than this – a home for a group of congenial young men living and working together as they prepare themselves for the more strenuous life of mature age and especially so when they are united under the vows of Alpha Tau Omega."⁹⁴ By the end of 1938, therefore, Gamma Zeta and its leaders could breathe a sigh of relief about the state of the chapter house and their financial situation in general, something they had not been

⁹² House Corporation to Alumni, May 31, 1938, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁹³ Elwyn Simmons to Gamma Zeta Alumni, June 16, 1938, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

⁹⁴ Frank Scott to Stewart Daniels (with an excerpt from a letter from Alice Clark), June 9, 1938, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

able to do since embarking on the new construction project at the beginning of the decade. The future, at least the physical future embodied in the house at 1101 Pennsylvania Avenue, seemed quite secure.

Although the chapter's financial difficulties demanded almost constant attention from the alumni leadership in the 1930s, life among the active undergraduate members certainly did not grind to a halt. On the contrary, Gamma Zeta chapter continued to grow larger (the new house could accommodate fifty men, and the chapter strove to stay at this mark in order to balance its budget) and seemingly busier every year, as the pages of *The Gamma Zeta* illustrate. The house became rather famous on campus for its musical talents, as Dick Cisne '32, Everett Cathey '37, and later Charlie Caudle '41 established themselves as sought-after band leaders. In 1931 Cisne led dances every Friday and Saturday night at Bradley Hall, and Caudle's band, composed almost entirely of ATO musicians, was asked to "send off" the Illini football team when they traveled to Los Angeles to play USC in 1939. Caudle and his players also accompanied Gamma Zeta in the Homecoming Stunt Show that year, leading them to a win.⁹⁵

Gamma Zeta members in the 1930s continued to be interested in athletics, both varsity and intramural. In 1934 Ken Bradley was a member of the varsity football squad, and the house team was particularly dominant in intramural softball.⁹⁶ In 1935 Bradley earned his varsity letter, reportedly the first ATO in many years to win this honor.⁹⁷ Other individual standouts during the 1930s included Lewis "Pick" Dehner '39, who won a varsity letter in basketball in 1938 and scored 25 points during the Illinois-Manhattan game at Madison Square Garden, a point total that was, at the time, an NCAA record. Described as playing a "careful, sure game," he was also

⁹⁵ Volume 3, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1931; Volume 9, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1937; Volume 10, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1939, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁹⁶ Volume 6, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1934, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁹⁷ Christmas 1935 issue of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

currently leading the Big Ten in scoring. Behind the outstanding tumbling of Joe Giallombardo, the 1939 Illini gymnastics team won the NCAA championship. Giallombardo won the All-Around title and was also named the recipient of the Rizzuto Award as the outstanding Italian-American athlete of 1938-39. He was often called upon to entertain visitors to the chapter house with his tumbling tricks, especially the parents who visited for the Dad's and Mom's Weekends which were beginning to be popular at the University.⁹⁸ Finally, Ralph Ehni '41 earned a varsity letter in football as a kicker and quarterback, and in 1938 he scored "the only touchdown that Illinois has ever made against the Irish."⁹⁹ Toward the latter part of the decade the chapter set its sights not only on winning individual sport titles in intramural competition but also on taking the overall crown; one strategy was to field teams in as many sports as possible. In 1937 Gamma Zeta organized teams in softball, volleyball, tennis, swimming, baseball, and ice hockey, and by the next year the house had climbed to fourth place in the final intramural standings.¹⁰⁰ In 1939 house intramural teams won eighteen new cups and finished second in the overall standings.¹⁰¹ It seemed that strategy, and individual athletic achievement, certainly paid off for Gamma Zeta.

In addition to athletics, active chapter members participated in a variety of campus activities in the 1930s, and many of them filled the leadership roles that Dean Clark had hoped they would. Gamma Zeta brothers filled important roles on the *Illio* (yearbook) and *Illini* (daily newspaper) staffs, and in 1939 Bob Ingle and Charlie Caudle were the editors of the popular "Campus Scout" feature in the latter publication.¹⁰² Other brothers were asked to be members of campus and national honoraries, such as SACHEM, Phi Beta Kappa, and Tau Beta Bi (engineering),

⁹⁸ Volume 11, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1939; Volume 11, No. 5 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1939, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

⁹⁹ Christmas 1938 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰⁰ Volume 13, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1937; Volume 19, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1938, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰¹ Volume 11, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1939, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

and many were active in Student Senate, class politics, and the Interfraternity Council (IFC). In 1938, Joe McLaughlin and Bill Defenbaugh worked to reorganize an “Illini Flying Club” that had existed in the early 1930s, drawing on their shared interest in flying.¹⁰³ Gamma Zeta member Walter Morey ’40 earned an especially high honor in 1939 when he was chosen to lead 4,000 ROTC students as Colonel for the upcoming year. Morey had won several previous military honors during his Illinois career, including the University gold medal as the most outstanding sophomore cadet and the Connor Cups for best drilled freshman and sophomore in field artillery. He was also involved in a staggering array of other campus activities, including the Student Alumni Association, the Accountancy Club, IFC, YMCA, and the Student Senate, for which he served as treasurer.¹⁰⁴ Although Walter Morey was certainly an over-achiever and likely not the “representative” Gamma Zeta member of the 1930s, the chapter as a whole did reflect a real diversity of interests and activities, from athletics to politics to flying.

The fact that many individual Gamma Zeta members were recognized for high academic achievement in campus and national honoraries indicates that the fraternity used its yearly Rush to look for more than athletes and cunning politicians, but scholarship did not cease to be a source of anxiety for the chapter in the 1930s. In 1932, the House Corporation’s “Emergency Committee” took a break from dealing with its financial crises to approve the appointment of Arthur Hjortland as house “praeceptor,” a position that required the graduate student and Gamma Zeta alumnus to live in the chapter house to “assist the head of the house in maintaining high scholarship and enforcing discipline.”¹⁰⁵ Hjortland had previously been credited with helping the chapter’s grade point average rise from 59th to 7th place among fraternities, so he was an

¹⁰³ Volume 10, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1938, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰⁴ Volume 11, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1939, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/94/1, Box 49.

¹⁰⁵ Rus Hunter to Paul Snyder, August 18, 1932; Minutes of the Emergency Committee Meeting, August 28, 1932, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48, 164.

excellent choice for the job. Although it is unclear how long the position lasted, by 1936 at least some of the alumni were favorably impressed by the chapter's improvement, such as Ken Thies who wrote a letter of praise and congratulations to the active chapter in *The Gamma Zeta*.¹⁰⁶ A Rush booklet (titled *The Quill*) published in the mid-1930s includes a section on "Scholarship Training and Requirements" and informs potential members that the fraternity can help them with the "principal stumbling block of most freshman": the fact that they have not learned how to study properly in high school. To remedy this issue, a freshman study seminar was held every weekday evening from 7:30-10:00pm, and free activities were only allowed from 4:00pm until dinnertime. After 10:00pm, freshmen were free to make phone calls, do additional studying, or go to bed. Upperclassmen studying the same subjects were also assigned to freshmen to help them with their transition to university-level coursework, and the chapter sponsored occasional faculty-student dinners in order to help relations between students and professors.¹⁰⁷ These scholarship regulations seem sound and sensible, but the scholastic health of Gamma Zeta from year to year was always determined by the sum of its many parts rather than the good intentions of alumni or active leaders. The 1930s, therefore, proved little different from other decades in terms of scholarship, with grade point averages tending to stabilize somewhere in the middle of the fraternity pack.

Although *The Quill*, published around 1936, asserts that Gamma Zeta-sponsored social activities were "only held on weekends and when there are no exams scheduled," an active social calendar has long been a source of distraction for college students and the men of ATO in the 1930s were not immune. *The Quill* stressed that most of the social events scheduled by the chapter were "stag affairs" that did not cost members very much money, but the events that made

¹⁰⁶ Volume 12, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1936, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰⁷ *The Quill* (Rush Booklet), c. 1936; Volume 12, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1936, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

for good press in *The Gamma Zeta* definitely involved women. Dinner and dance exchanges with sororities, the staple of Greek life on a large university campus, took place with some regularity during this decade, but the chapter was especially proud of a new innovation in fraternity-sorority relations: its hay-ride and fish fry. Gamma Zeta inaugurated this event in 1937 and boasted of it being “the first affair of its magnitude, and held at such a distance from the campus, to be officially sanctioned by the Dean of Women,” an endorsement which “speaks well of the reputation the chapter is now enjoying.”¹⁰⁸ In a later issue of *The Gamma Zeta* the chapter’s activities again stressed that their interactions with women on campus were universally recognized as “exemplary in the way they were conducted.”¹⁰⁹ Other traditional social activities continued throughout this decade, including Homecoming and Founders’ Day celebrations during which alumni were welcomed back to the house, and growing Dad’s Day and Mother’s Day events that usually included banquets, football for the fathers, and special presentations and serenades for the mothers.

Some long-standing aspects of fraternity life were changing, although slowly and often under duress. In 1936 *The Gamma Zeta* reported to alumni that the University was attempting to “curb the ‘horseplay’ of the old-fashioned Hell Week,” during which pledges had been subjected to various “disagreeable tasks” in their quest to prove their worth. The new University regulations included mandatory attendance at all classes during “Hell Week,” a minimum of seven hours of continuous sleep for pledges, and the elimination of the worst of the “disagreeable tasks.”¹¹⁰ These regulations, of course, address what would later be recognized as hazing and would become the source of much controversy both within and outside the Greek system, especially in the latter half of the century. The article in *The Gamma Zeta* takes the stance of

¹⁰⁸ Volume 13, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1937, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁰⁹ Christmas 1937 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹¹⁰ Volume 11, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1936, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

merely reporting the information rather than betraying any opinion from the active chapter or offering a clue as to how it was dealing with the University regulations, but it is notable that University concern about the subject of hazing preceded national ATO action by several decades. In any case, the “horseplay” associated with fraternity pledgeship certainly did not end in the 1930s, and Gamma Zeta was hardly unique in this regard.

One other significant change occurring for Gamma Zeta chapter in the 1930s was the death, in 1932, of Thomas Arkle Clark. Clark’s passing truly signaled the end of an era for the fraternity, since as “Initiate No. 1” he had witnessed all of the chapter’s triumphs and defeats in its first fifty years. In many cases, he served as leader and mentor to both active and alumni members, especially in both house construction campaigns. His official ATO memorial service on November 4, 1934 was attended by Dr. Paul R. Hickok, Worthy Grand Chaplain of Alpha Tau Omega, as well as many other national ATO officers, some of whom – Sidney Fithian, Frank Scott, and Stewart Daniels - hailed from Clark’s own Gamma Zeta chapter. The fact that so many prominent ATOs had their start in Gamma Zeta must have made Clark extraordinarily proud, and they certainly owed at least part of their success to his example and encouragement. After the memorial service, the fraternity dedicated a plaque that was placed at Clark’s grave, recognizing him as a member of the High Council, past Worthy Grand Chief, and Educational Adviser.¹¹¹ Even after his death, Clark’s memory proved a strong impetus for action in Gamma Zeta, as was evident in the memorial fundraising campaign launched in 1938. He had also shepherded the chapter through the first World War by virtue of his position as Chairman of the SATC Committee, and this leadership would be missed in the next decade when Gamma Zeta faced the even larger challenge of World War II.

¹¹¹ Thomas Arkle Clark Biographical File, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 47.

The 1940s: War And Recovery

The first few years of the 1940s were relatively quiet ones for Gamma Zeta, as the war in Europe did not begin to significantly affect campus and fraternity life until at least 1942. In these years the undergraduate chapter enjoyed its customary athletic and social activities; its new strategy of entering almost every intramural sports event continued to bring high finishes (third in 1940 and second in 1941) and music, as in the 1930s, remained a large part of chapter life and fame. In 1940 and 1941 the ATO house band, called the “ATO South Campus Blues Blowers” recorded two phonograph albums of “the tunes that made them famous” and played for house dances, football sendoffs, the Stunt Show, Mother’s Day, an All-University Sing, the Mens’ League Carnival swing band contest, and at mock political conventions on campus. The “Blues Blowers” also appeared on the “House of Overgard” variety radio program on WDWS, produced by Gamma Zeta chapter member Charlie Caudle ’41. The program, for which Caudle also served as star and host, featured a different fraternity or sorority each week and helped to further solidify Gamma Zeta’s musical reputation.¹¹² Individual Gamma Zeta members were involved in some unusual pursuits as well: *The Gamma Zeta* reported that in 1940 and 1941, Dean Olson and Bob Pfeifer ensured that the chapter could boast the winner of the Ag Show Pig-Catching Contest for two years in a row!¹¹³

In October of 1941 all active and alumni members of the fraternity were informed of an important milestone by John Ruettinger, President of the newly-renamed Thomas Arkle Clark Chapter House Memorial, Inc. Ruettinger reported that the goals of this organization (the successor to the House Corporation, formed during the special 1938 campaign) had been met and

¹¹² Volume 11, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, May 1940; Volume 11, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1940; Volume 12, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, May 1941, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹¹³ Volume 11, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, May 1940; Volume 12, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, May 1941, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

that it had been able to purchase the deed for the house from the Danville Building Association and to secure a mortgage for the \$55,000 balance remaining on the note. The key to these transactions was relieving the Clark estate from any liability for the chapter house, and Gamma Zeta members could rest assured that this matter was now settled for posterity.¹¹⁴ The Memorial corporation also commissioned a portrait of Clark to hang in the chapter house, and it was installed in a special ceremony at the chapter house in April of 1942. It was around this same time that *The Gamma Zeta* began to contain reports of Gamma Zeta members who had enlisted in the armed forces, including several members of the active chapter who left in the midst of the semester. By December, Gamma Zetas were serving in ROTC, the Navy Air Corps, the Medical Corps, the Navy Construction Reserves, the Army Air Corps, the Marine Reserves, the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps, and the Naval Enlisted Reserves.¹¹⁵ It was obvious that the chapter would be faced with many of the same challenges that it had confronted in World War I, including a declining membership and the possibility of having to vacate the chapter house. Since both of these issues would have an adverse effect on chapter finances, the Memorial corporation must have been very pleased to have settled its 1930s crises just as new ones were arising.

By December 1943, chapter records indicate that the United States' war effort was beginning to alter many aspects of campus life, including the fraternity experience. The March 1943 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* reported that eighteen active members and seven pledges had left school for military service since September 1942, and the overall enrollment of the University had dropped from 12,000 to 6,000 by June. A further report on Gamma Zeta's status at the end of May revealed that of sixty-eight total members (actives and pledges), thirty-one

¹¹⁴ Volume 12, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1941, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹¹⁵ Volume 13, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1942; Christmas 1942 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

were in active service, nineteen were on reserve duty, and several others were either awaiting calls or were in deferred jobs or medical school.¹¹⁶ *The Gamma Zeta* reported these numbers partly to alert alumni and actives to the possibility that the chapter house might have to be closed in the future, either due to lack of funds to keep it open or because it would be taken over by one of the armed forces organizations operating on campus. In preparation for this contingency, an inventory of the house was conducted in June, and most valuable items were put in secure storage in accordance with University-issued regulations for “Fraternities Negotiating with University for Use as Barracks.” Some of the items stored by Gamma Zeta chapter during this time included furniture, lamps, curtains, musical instruments, house flags and poles, ash trays, gold and blue ATO basketball shirts, an old cigarette machine, trophies, regalia, and “secret work.”¹¹⁷

The question of whether or not the Gamma Zeta chapter house was actually taken over by a service organization is rather hard to answer based on archival sources, as there are conflicting reports. One article in the November 1943 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* indicates that the ATO house was *not* one of the forty-five fraternity houses taken over at that point, but elsewhere in the publication readers were informed that the fraternity’s address “...has been changed from 1101 Pennsylvania to 602 Matthews to 1009 Penn...”¹¹⁸ While the significance of 602 Matthews is unclear (and there is no other indication that Gamma Zeta chapter was ever actually housed there during the 1940s), 1009 Pennsylvania is the address of ATO’s neighboring fraternity, Sigma Nu. Beginning in late 1943, seven University of Illinois fraternities organized a “Fraternity Co-Op” at the Sigma Nu house, allowing members from Sigma Nu, Alpha Tau Omega, Delta Kappa

¹¹⁶ Volume 12, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1943; Volume 13, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1943, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹¹⁷ Inventory of ATO chapter house taken by Commissary Norman D. Wells, June 9, 1943, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹¹⁸ Volume 14, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1943, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Epsilon, Delta Upsilon, Kappa Sigma, Sigma Chi, and Delta Tau Delta to live together. The houses gave parties and dances in conjunction with one another during this time, but it is not clear how house expenses and upkeep were divided among the seven groups.¹¹⁹ Again, it is not clear whether the Gamma Zeta chapter house had to be surrendered to armed services use or not, but by late 1943 the chapter had only seven active members on its chapter roll and a few pledges waiting in the wings, so their meager house bills could not have justified keeping the huge house at 1101 Pennsylvania open. The chapter was able to use the house for special occasions throughout the war years, such as a small initiation for four new members on September 17, 1944.¹²⁰ The Sigma Nu “Fraternity Co-Op” therefore emerged as an attractive option for chapters that wanted to scale back operations during the war rather than curtail them entirely.

While ATO members were undoubtedly concerned about the situation on campus, the pages of *The Gamma Zeta* were increasingly filled with news of active and alumni brothers serving in the armed forces all over the world. Many of them relied on the chapter publication for news of their friends and for a small slice of “home” when they were far away, such as Lt. Jim Griffin who wrote from England to say that he always had *The Gamma Zeta* sent to him and looked forward to every issue.¹²¹ Griffin was later awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for completing a number of daylight bombing raids in Nazi-occupied Europe, an honor that was also reported in the pages of *The Gamma Zeta*.¹²² Brothers from all eras undoubtedly enjoyed reading about Griffin’s accomplishments and about the exciting exploits of the likes of Lt. Jim “Wacky” Unland, who submitted the following update to the September 1944 issue:

¹¹⁹ Volume 14, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1943; Volume 14, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²⁰ “ATO Newsletter” (informal publication by alumni), October 1, 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²¹ Volume 14, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²² Volume 14, No. 5 of *The Gamma Zeta*, September 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

“Am sitting behind the driver’s seat of a jeep with a 5-gallon can for a desk, looking out over the beautiful hills of France – gorgeous scenery here behind the lines (resting) but who likes scenery! Have been here a month – just long enough to have trouble with a 80mm German mortar, the result being seven stitches in my head – Jeez, guys, I got the Poiple Heart too! What a thrill!!!!”¹²³

Major Walt Morey ’40, who had been so outstanding during his time as an undergraduate, wrote to say that he had been “...following the Krauts from England, Oran, Tunisia, Sicily, Italy and now France” and was “still unscathed.” Often news would come from parents or wives when the brothers themselves were unable to write. In late 1944, Frances White, wife of Lt. Richard M. White ’44, wrote to say that her husband had just completed a trip to Russia, one of many wartime expeditions which allowed him to engage in what his wife called his “hobby”: comparing the women of different countries. Apparently his time in Russia convinced him that “...he need look no further...the Russian women could undoubtedly cut the most wood.” Frances added that Richard “...seems to admire them greatly and to respect their muscle.”¹²⁴

These letters and vignettes obviously represent the lighter side of war, the kinds of heroic and casually amusing stories that human beings gravitate toward in order to somewhat blunt the blow of war’s harsh realities and human tragedies. Gamma Zeta chapter was not immune from these tragedies, however, and the pages of its newsletter attest to this fact. Sometimes when parents and wives wrote with news of their sons and husbands it was not because the men were simply too far from mail service; at least four ATOs were held as prisoners of war in Germany between 1943 and 1945, one of whose wife gave birth to a baby boy in his absence.¹²⁵ Two Gamma Zeta alumni, Captain Robert Thomas ’15 and Lt. David S. Terry, were killed in flight training exercises in the United States. Thomas died in a plane crash in California after a twenty-

¹²³ Volume 14, No. 5 of *The Gamma Zeta*, September 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²⁴ “ATO Newsletter,” November 15, 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²⁵ Volume 14, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1943 (Lt. James F. Bickers ’40); Volume 14, No. 5 of *The Gamma Zeta*, September 1944 (Lt. Hilmer C. Landholt ’44 and Lt. Ralph Foster ’42); Volume 15, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1945 (Sgt. Joseph E. Bagale ’41), ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

seven year career in the Navy; his most recent assignment was directing the construction of naval bases in the Pacific as well as the reconstruction of Pearl Harbor following the Japanese attack.¹²⁶ Later records indicate that at least ten Gamma Zeta ATOs were killed in action during the course of the war, but one of the most poignant stories is that of Bill Pulverman '42. Due to normal delays in mail delivery during this time period, Pulverman seems to eerily speak from beyond the grave in the October 1944 issue of the informal "ATO Newsletter" published by three early-1940s brothers during the war. The October issue printed a letter from Pulverman in which he expresses his excitement at finally getting to see some action as a paratrooper after two years in the service, although he admits that his long stay in England has still not allowed him to "...figure out these English wimmen."¹²⁷ The following issue of the newsletter, however, reports the sad news that Pulverman was killed in action in Holland on September 21, ten days before he "shared" his cheery missive with Gamma Zeta brothers.¹²⁸ Bill Pulverman's death serves as a sobering reminder of the human cost of war but also provides a glimpse into the mindset of so many young men at this time, who were excited and eager to participate in what seemed unquestionably like a worthy cause. In the end, Gamma Zeta chapter seems fairly lucky to have lost so few members while being able to keep its active chapter afloat throughout the World War II years.

In 1945 Gamma Zeta chapter celebrated both the end of the war and its 50th anniversary. Although the Golden Anniversary events held at the chapter house in March were very small, they were festive due to the chapter's recent re-occupation of 1101 Pennsylvania Avenue after several years of floating from one place to another. By June there were again twenty-four men in

¹²⁶ Volume 13, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1943; Volume 14, No. 2, January 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²⁷ "ATO Newsletter," October 1, 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹²⁸ "ATO Newsletter," November 15, 1944, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

the active chapter (counting both actives and pledges) and more and more Gamma Zeta members were trickling back from their service assignments, although many would remain in places such as “the Pacific” (perhaps a purposefully vague term) and Romania for several more years. At the end of 1945, ATO’s famous bandleader Charlie Caudle was touring Europe in a USO show entitled “Up in Central Park.”¹²⁹ When the house dining room re-opened in November 1945, the members of the chapter agreed that “house spirit” was greatly improved.¹³⁰ The latter half of the 1940s would see normalcy return to Gamma Zeta, along with a huge increase in both the chapter’s and the University’s size.

By 1946, only one year after the war ended, the Gamma Zeta chapter house was again filled to capacity and the fraternity’s total membership was a robust sixty-seven men, many of whom were returning veterans from a variety of classes. Some of these “veteran brothers” were among the hundreds living in quickly-erected temporary housing located very close to the Gamma Zeta chapter house. In the 1950s, the chapter would initiate a Christmas party for children living in this “Illini Village,” perhaps inspired by the needs and experiences of its own members.¹³¹ Although athletic endeavors had continued at the University throughout the war, many of the chapter’s and the University’s top individual athletes had been lost to the war effort. One of these stars was Walt “Junior” Kirk, who as a freshman scrimmaged against the famous Illinois “Whiz Kids” in 1943. Kirk managed to stay in school throughout almost the entire war, and did not depart for the Army until the end of the 1944-1945 school year. He finally made it back in 1947, but unfortunately for him so did all the “Whiz Kids,” and *The Gamma Zeta* reported that he was suffering from “benchitis” in the 1946-1947 season. Things worked out well for Kirk by the end of the season, however, when he signed a contract worth \$10,000 for a

¹²⁹ Volume 16, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1945, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Volume 16, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1946, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

six-month season with the Fort Wayne Zollners of the National Basketball League, the forerunner of the NBA's Detroit Pistons.¹³²

Even with Kirk's departure, ATO continued to have a strong presence in Illinois athletics, especially on the basketball court. The 1947-1948 team included five Gamma Zeta members – Chick Doster, Bill Erickson, Burdette “Pirate” Thurlby, Van Anderson, and Jim Marks – and the chapter liked to joke that the Illini should simply field an “all-ATO” team and be done with it. In 1948-1949 these five were joined by Walt “Slip” Kersulis, who was also a football standout for the Illini in the late 1940s. The ATO-dominated Illinois basketball team won the Big Nine¹³³ conference championship in 1949 and Bill Erickson was one of its most decorated stars, being named a Collier's All-American by the National Basketball Coaches' Association, 3rd team All-American by *The Sporting News*, 1st team All-Big Nine, Helm's Foundation All-American, and AP honorable mention. Jim Marks was nominated for Athlete of the Year at the University of Illinois and lost out only to Dike Eddleman, hailed as the greatest individual athlete in University history.¹³⁴ ATO also had a large presence on the Illinois varsity track team in the late 1940s with four lettermen, including the Twomey brothers John and Vic. John toured Greece, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Albania in the summer of 1947 with a team of

¹³² Volume 15, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1945; Volume 17, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1947; Volume 17, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1947, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49. For information on the Ft. Wayne Zollners, see “Detroit Pistons” on www.wikipedia.com (accessed August 15, 2007).

¹³³ The NCAA athletic conference known today as the “Big Ten” was first conceived of in 1895 and first referred to as the “Big Nine” in 1899. In 1917, it became the “Big Ten” when Michigan rejoined after a hiatus of nine years, joining Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio State, Purdue, Northwestern, Wisconsin, and the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago decided to de-emphasize varsity athletics after World War II and withdrew from the conference in 1946, making it again the “Big Nine.” When Michigan State joined in 1950 the conference regained its “Big Ten” moniker, and this name remained unchanged even after Penn State joined in 1990 and brought the total number of teams in the conference to eleven. For more information on Big Ten history, see “Big Ten Conference” on www.wikipedia.com (accessed August 15, 2007).

¹³⁴ Volume 18, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1947; Volume 19, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1948; Volume 14, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1949; Volume 19, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49. For information on Dwight “Dike” Eddleman (1922-2001), see “Dwight Eddleman” on www.wikipedia.com (accessed August 15, 2007).

American track stars, winning three of eight races.¹³⁵ With so many outstanding individual athletes in the house, it is not surprising that Gamma Zeta continued its winning ways in intramural competition as well. The July 1949 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* proudly reported that ATO had placed second in that year's intramural race and, in fact, had not finished lower than fifth for the past twelve years. This incredible run included at least one overall first-place finish and helped to further solidify Gamma Zeta's reputation as the team to beat in most, if not all, intramural sports.¹³⁶

The relative prosperity of the immediate postwar years, at least in comparison to the lean and anxious times in the 1930s, seems to have permeated all aspects of Gamma Zeta chapter. In addition to a robust athletic program, actives in the undergraduate chapter threw themselves into a wide variety of campus activities. In 1947, for instance, Gamma Zeta had officers in Ma-Wan-Da, Sachem, IFC, Skull and Crescent, and the newly-formed Board of Fraternity Affairs, a committee of faculty, alumni, and current students. The chapter also had a grade point average above the all-university average.¹³⁷ Tom Crews was a particularly outstanding individual member who was named the valedictorian of the class of 1949, a class that included the largest group of mid-year graduates in the University's history. Crews was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Lambda Upsilon (a national chemistry honorary), Phi Eta Sigma (a freshman scholastic honorary), Ma-Wan-Da, and was past president of Skull and Crescent.¹³⁸

By the 1948-1949 academic year, Gamma Zeta chapter had also managed to re-establish its traditional social activities, including the popular sorority exchanges. In the fall of 1947 the chapter participated in an exchange that was clearly still influenced by the war, when they

¹³⁵ Volume 18, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1947, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹³⁶ Volume 19, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹³⁷ Volume 17, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1947, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹³⁸ Volume 14, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

assisted members of Gamma Phi Beta in gleaning corn in a drive to help Europe's needy. After the gleaning the two groups gathered at the Gamma Phi Beta house for a dinner and informal dance, combining social service and social interaction in a model that would become more popular in the Greek community in the coming decades.¹³⁹ In the fall of 1948 active member Swede Anderson built a new outdoor brick fireplace on the chapter house's patio, and the January 1949 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* credits this structure with being the literal center of a semester's worth of successful sorority exchanges that helped ATO "...gain[ed] many new friends and much social prestige on campus."¹⁴⁰ In the spring of 1949 Gamma Zeta chapter introduced another innovation to the University of Illinois campus, its "Outhouse Scramble" dance, billed as a "hill-billy costume affair." The first incarnation of this soon-to-be controversial event featured Tom Wich calling a square dance from a hay wagon, cider tapped from a "realistic" still, and photographs taken with the still, wagon, cornstalks, and hay. The dance's most unique feature, and the one that would attract the attention and censure of the Dean of Women in the 1950s, was the costuming. All "feminine guests" attending the Outhouse Scramble were presented with two yards of gingham material one week prior to the dance and were promised two prizes: one for the best costume, and one for the most returned material. At the inaugural Scramble, Tom Roland's "pin-girl" Bobbie Byrnes won the best costume prize, and Ed Franzen's date Beverly Anderson apparently returned the most material, meaning that she *wore* the least.¹⁴¹ It was obviously the latter prize that the Dean of Women found so objectionable, but by all accounts the Outhouse Scramble was a big hit on campus and ATO fought to keep it as part of the social calendar.

¹³⁹ Volume 16, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1948, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴⁰ Volume 14, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴¹ Volume 14, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

The other primary concern for the active chapter in the late 1940s seems to have been the physical condition of the house, and their interest in improving it seems to have been at least partially connected to the increase in sorority interaction. In early 1949 the actives voted to devote a portion of their monthly house bills (at this point around \$80) toward a fund for new furniture and redecoration, and the House Corporation agreed to match this amount with its own funds.¹⁴² Later in the year the chapter printed a special “Rehabilitation Extra” of *The Gamma Zeta* to update alumni on the restoration and redecoration projects currently underway in the chapter house and to ask for their financial assistance. Over the summer of 1949 the public areas of the house downstairs had been professionally redecorated in a project paid for entirely by the House Corporation, but there had been no money allotted for the upstairs bedrooms and study areas. The active members proposed a cooperative effort between themselves and the alumni in order to accomplish the upper floor refurbishment, reasoning that, “Living in the house, we are readily available to do the work, while you, who have been out of school for awhile, are in a better position to put such a fund in operation. We think this is a fair arrangement – how about you?” The actives pointed out that attractive and comfortable study and sleeping rooms could be an invaluable tool during Rush, and asked alumni to consider the effect that a tour of these rooms could have on their sons or prospective members that they had recommended. They asserted that showing off newly renovated rooms would demonstrate “...a fraternity with ideas, ambition, and close undergraduate-alumni cooperation!”¹⁴³ The active chapter was eventually able to raise nearly all of the \$2,000 that it asked alumni to donate, and the study room refurbishment project was successfully launched. This campaign also set the precedent for the system of “petitioning” that continued into the 1990s, in which individual members could petition the House Corporation

¹⁴² Volume 14, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴³ “Rehabilitation Extra” of *The Gamma Zeta*, October 1949, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

for permission and funds to undertake repairs or upgrades in their own rooms. The active member was expected to provide labor as well as a set amount of money from his own pocket, but this amount was always supplemented by the House Corporation.

The initiative displayed by the active chapter in the late 1940s provides a good indication of the health of Gamma Zeta as a whole. As the chapter entered the 1950s, the University was bursting at the seams with returning veterans and their families, and it is probable that many of these men brought a more mature leadership to the fraternity that is evident in campaigns like the house rehabilitation project. Despite having to vacate its chapter house and dealing with a depleted wartime membership, Gamma Zeta emerged from the 1940s as a strong and capable fraternity that enjoyed a solid reputation on the University of Illinois campus.

The 1950s: Fraternity and Community

During the course of the 1950s, Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega would again outgrow its home as the fraternity's size increased. More and more men were entering college in these years and the competition to get the "best" men during Rush intensified, so ATO could not afford to offer inferior accommodations to its prospective members. In the early part of the decade the active and alumni members concentrated on internal improvements, such as the ongoing rehabilitation project begun by the actives in the late 1940s. Almost every issue of *The Gamma Zeta* from these years details small improvements, such as rebuilding chimneys, fixing leaky shower floors, and redecorating specific rooms. Funds for these projects sometimes came from the House Corporation, sometimes from the actives themselves, and sometimes from the Parents' Association, which was formed in the 1940s but had a somewhat intermittent existence in the years afterward. In 1951 the Parents' Association provided over \$200 during Dad's Day

Weekend to help purchase new furniture for the chapter's Card Room, a gesture that was much appreciated by the actives.¹⁴⁴

The 1950s seem to have inaugurated a much more coordinated and polished approach to Rush for Gamma Zeta chapter, as professionally-printed "rush booklets" appear in the archival record for the first time. These booklets were sent to potential rushees in order to give an overview of ATO and describe what a pledge's experience might be if he were to join, and they usually featured several photographs in addition to explanatory text. The 1951 booklet showcased Worthy Master Bob Bacon and Rushing Chairman Dick Heath on the cover, dressed smartly in suits and standing on the impressive front porch of the chapter house. The content of the booklet is interesting for what it reveals about the fraternity's self-perception in this new decade, as well as the image that it wanted to portray to potential members and their parents. In particular, Gamma Zeta's rush booklet stressed that, "The present-day fraternity had lost its snobbishness. No longer do fraternities look for men with rich parents, snappy clothes, and flashy cars. Nowadays, a fraternity looks at you for yourself."¹⁴⁵ The "Here is Our Story" portion of the booklet aims to give a snapshot of day-to-day life in the fraternity, describing Homecoming decorations, Monday night "pledge entertainment," "bull sessions" on the "seven-passenger sofa," Wednesday night sorority exchanges, dances like the Outhouse Scramble, and participation in the Spring Carnival, which gained great popularity in Gamma Zeta in the 1950s. This section also describes the chapter's recent abolition of "Hell Week" in favor of "Help Week," during which there was "no hazing, no swatting..." but instead "constructive work in the community."¹⁴⁶ In 1951, Gamma Zeta pledges used their "Help Week" to collect used furniture for families moving into new housing units in the community, some of them likely veterans

¹⁴⁴ Volume 21, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1951, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴⁵ "ATO at Illinois" Rush Booklet, c. Fall/Winter 1951, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

returning to complete their university studies after military service. They received recognition for this project within the University as well as outside it, as a December 16, 1951 article in the *Champaign News-Gazette* illustrates.¹⁴⁷ Over the next few years, other Help Week projects included building a playground for children living in a trailer camp in Urbana, cleaning the grounds of the Champaign County Nursing Home, and sweeping and scrubbing streets in the Champaign business district.¹⁴⁸ Although much evidence exists to support the fact that hazing did not end in Gamma Zeta chapter of ATO or in many other national fraternities in the 1950s, the shift to “Help Week” does signal a new interest in community service and philanthropy, activities that would soon be required by national fraternal organizations.

Other community service projects that occupied Gamma Zeta’s time in the 1950s included the Illini Village Christmas Party, inaugurated in 1951. Illini Village, located very close to the ATO house, was the at-first temporary and later more permanent housing development for returning veterans and their families. The active chapter decided to entertain the children living there with a tree, a Santa Claus (chapter member Jim Norman), snacks, and candy. The January 1952 issue of *The Gamma Zeta* that reported on the event predicted that it “would become a custom which will foster good relationships between the Fraternity and our Illini Village neighbors.”¹⁴⁹ The party continued to be held throughout the 1950s for the Illini Village children and at later points for other needy youngsters, so it was definitely a successful and enjoyable endeavor for all involved. Gamma Zeta also participated enthusiastically in one of the biggest campus-wide community service projects of the 1950s, the Spring Carnival. This collection of booths, stunts, skits, and musical acts raised money for a wide variety of charities

¹⁴⁷ “Help Week Fine Substitute for Hell Week on Campus,” *Champaign News-Gazette*, December 16, 1951, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴⁸ Volume 24, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1953; Volume 30, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1959; Volume 29, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1958, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁴⁹ Volume 22, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1952, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

and featured the talents of many campus organizations, including fraternities and sororities who would often pair up for their entries. From 1950 through 1956, Gamma Zeta partnered with many different sororities and presented a streak of award-winning entries in the Carnival, including a first place finish for “Nothing Special,” a presentation with a railroad theme, in 1953.¹⁵⁰ In 1951 their “walk-through” booth entitled “Almost Every Night” drew praise from the *Daily Illini* for eschewing the “sex angle” and providing “less wild women and more real entertainment.”¹⁵¹ In 1954 the chapter’s entry with Phi Beta Phi won second place after being “unjustly accused” of stuffing their ticket box, which was apparently one of the methods used for determining prizes in the competition in addition to raising money for the charities. *The Gamma Zeta* reported on these allegations indignantly, noting that this was the first year that such ticket-stuffing was not “standard practice.”¹⁵² This minor scandal was also covered by the *Champaign-Urbana News Gazette*, which reported that the ATO house flew a Confederate flag to protest the Illini Union’s investigation into the ticket-stuffing allegations, presumably referencing the Confederacy’s fight against a very different “Union.”¹⁵³ This incident demonstrates that the chapter took its participation in Spring Carnival very seriously, at least when there was competition involved.

Partnerships and exchanges with sororities were becoming more and more a part of fraternity life in the 1950s; apparently gone were the days when most events were “stag” and then men entertained themselves primarily with “smokers” and piano sessions in the house. In addition to events like the Spring Carnival, Gamma Zeta members paired with sororities for the annual “Turkey Run,” a comical relay race that awarded a turkey to the winning team. ATO had

¹⁵⁰ Volume 24, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1953, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁵¹ *Daily Illini*, April 17, 1951, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁵² Volume 25, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, August 1954, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁵³ “Tiff With Union: ATOs Fly Confederate Flag, Won’t Secede,” *Champaign-Urbana News Gazette*, April 28, 1954, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

an excellent track record in this event as well and racked up many wins throughout the 1950s, after which they would invite their sorority counterparts over for a traditional Thanksgiving feast featuring the unfortunate prize bird. In 1953, ATO partnered with Alpha Gamma Delta to win the prize, but chapter members admitted to the *Champaign News-Gazette's* "Broadwalk Tatler" column that they had to purchase three more turkeys for the actual feast and that just prior to dinner the local fire department had to respond to a cloud of smoke rolling from the chapter house basement! Apparently the fire was quickly put out and the dinner proceeded without incident.¹⁵⁴ The same could not be said for the "Outhouse Scramble" dance, however, which after a triumphant debut in 1949 ran into serious controversy in 1953. In early March, Dean of Women Miriam Shelden got wind of the famous Outhouse Scramble "costume prize" and deemed that it and other features of the dance were "objectionable." She asked Dean of Men George Bargh to see that the objectionable features of the dance were changed, specifically the suggested attire for the young women attending. Dean Bargh's response was to send the ATO president for a meeting with Dean Shelden, during which she decreed that many of the intended decorations be changed (perhaps the "realistic still?" or the outhouse itself?) and that female guests should wear slacks, dungarees, or blue jeans. Dean Shelden reportedly gave her orders only a few hours prior to the start of the dance, forcing a *real* scramble among the participants. As the *News-Gazette* quipped on March 3, "The coed guests had no opportunity to display their ingenuity in conservation of cloth."¹⁵⁵

While ATO members and their dates were perhaps understandably miffed by the last-minute changes to their popular gathering, the "scandal" over Dean Shelden's involvement with

¹⁵⁴ "Broadwalk Tatler," *Champaign News-Gazette*, November 23, 1953, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁵⁵ " 'Outhouse Scramble' Confronts UI Senators," *Champaign News-Gazette*, March 3, 1953, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

the Outhouse Scramble surprisingly mushroomed into an affair of state-wide interest. In protest of the Dean's actions, the IFC brought the matter before the Student Senate and argued that the Dean had acted too late and had issued restrictions outside of her jurisdiction as Dean of *Women*. Dean Shelden responded that she had acted on the authority of her position as chairman of the Committee on Student Affairs Subcommittee on Student Social Events, a post that gave her the right to regulate events that involved *all* students, not just women. The archival record for Gamma Zeta chapter does not indicate the outcome of this Student Senate matter, but the available information makes it clear that in the fraternity's eyes, at least, the whole affair resulted in negative feelings toward Dean Shelden and positive publicity for ATO. The April 1953 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* boasts that several newspapers criticized the Dean for her actions and reported very favorably about the chapter. The newsletter was almost certainly referencing a short piece that appeared in the Chicago *Herald-American* on March 10, accompanied by a photograph of three attractive young women. The short article, entitled "Costumes 'Censored': Dean's Ban Stirs Storm," acquainted Chicago readers with the controversy that was currently stirring the state university's campus, although some of the minor details are clearly wrong:

"It's thumbs down on Dean of Women Miriam Shelden's order banning abbreviated costumes for the annual Spring Carnival dance of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity at the University of Illinois. Jo Stork (center), freshman student from Alton, wears costume made from a yard of material, which Dean Shelden wouldn't allow Jo to wear at the hop, while Alice Stewart (left) of Aurora and Harriet McLaughlin of Fairfield turn thumbs down on the jeans they were compelled to wear. The whole thing will come to a head tomorrow when the student senate meets to investigate Dean Shelden's action."¹⁵⁶

Despite all of this controversy, the Outhouse Scramble did not entirely disappear; instead, the party went "underground" for a few years and disguised itself as other events such as the 1954 "Inaugural Brawl" and a 1955 "hillbilly dance party" called "Still of the Night." These

¹⁵⁶ "Costumes 'Censored': Dean's Ban Stirs Storm," Chicago *Herald-American*, March 10, 1953, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

alternative events seem to have continued until 1959 when *The Gamma Zeta* again mentions a dance called “Outhouse Scramble,” at which all dates will be given “a shapely gunny sack” as a favor.¹⁵⁷ Either Dean Shelden had moved on from her post, or the campus and social climate had changed to such an extent that a dance with semi-revealing costumes no longer seemed so shocking.

American society *was* changing in the 1950s, as was the University of Illinois. On one hand, the university was growing larger every year and had begun to make plans to expand its physical plant with new academic buildings, athletic facilities, and student housing units. In 1957 the University announced plans to double its present enrollment of 19,000 by 1970, and specifically cited fraternities and sororities as organizations which could help house and acclimate the large volume of new students.¹⁵⁸ Among this influx were some students who had not previously gone to college in large numbers, especially African-Americans. Their arrival on college campuses in the 1950s brought many issues of discrimination and social equality to the fore, and came to shine a particular light on the so-called “restrictive membership clauses” included in the charters of most existing Greek organizations. ATO, like most other national fraternities at the time, had a specific clause in its charter that limited membership to white Christian males. As was discussed earlier in this history, the fraternity had considered the “Christian” question in the 1940s and decided to leave the provision in place. The 1954 National Congress in Atlanta marked the first time that ATO discussed the full import of the restrictive membership clause, because some colleges and universities were beginning to assert their own authority and demand that student organizations must be open to all in order to remain on campus. Although 39% of the delegates at the 1954 Congress were in favor of dropping ATO’s

¹⁵⁷ Volume 30, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, February 1959, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁵⁸ Volume 28, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1957, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

restrictive membership clause, no definitive action was taken. ATO continued to discuss the matter for the next ten years before voting, by more than a 2/3 majority, to eliminate the “white” and “Christian” portions of its membership clause in 1964 – the requirement that members needed to be “male” remained.¹⁵⁹ Gamma Zeta chapter does not seem to have faced the issue of restrictive membership clauses until late 1959, when chapter meeting minutes note that “the problem of our restrictive clause” was brought to the attention of the chapter in advance of discussion about the matter in the IFC.¹⁶⁰ The issue of fraternity membership would prove to be much more important in the 1960s, as ATO chapters nationally struggled with the question of whether their vision of “a good man” was in fact bounded not by character and action but by race and religion.

Not everything about fraternity life was undergoing change in the 1950s, however. Gamma Zeta chapter continued to be keenly interested in athletics and boasted more individual varsity stars, such as Bill Altenberger and Bruce Brothers on the excellent Illini basketball team in the middle of the decade. Both received their letters in 1956, and Brothers was named MVP of the 1955-1956 squad.¹⁶¹ The chapter also continued its prowess in intramural sports, although members often became frustrated at what seemed like their perennial second-place status, making Gamma ATO “always a bridesmaid and never a bride.”¹⁶² In 1957, *The Gamma Zeta* informed alumni that there were some “changes” being made in the chapter, particularly in its orientation toward certain activities. A short article in the newsletter explained that while ATO had made a name for itself in activities such as intramural athletics, the Spring Carnival, and the Homecoming decorating contests, the fraternity had been notoriously silent in “Union activities”

¹⁵⁹ Harry L. Biro, *The ATO Story: On to the Centennial* (1968), 176; 276-277.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes from Formal Chapter meeting, September 21, 1959, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶¹ Volume 27, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1956, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶² Volume 29, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1958, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

and other campus leadership positions.¹⁶³ Gamma Zeta's current actives wanted to correct this imbalance and set out to get more involved in campus affairs that did not necessarily connect only to the Greek system. The fruits of this new orientation would actually be more apparent in later years, but throughout the 1950s individual Gamma Zeta members were involved in campus honoraries, student and Greek government, and community service. The chapter also had to get serious about scholarship in the spring of 1956 after it was put on social probation for falling below the All-Men's Average and to thirty-seventh out of fifty-eight fraternities in grade point average.¹⁶⁴ By the fall semester the chapter had raised its average enough to win the Sigma Nu trophy for the greatest scholastic improvement, but the collective grade point average continued to fluctuate for the rest of the decade.¹⁶⁵ At least some members of the active chapter seem to have realized that good scholarship would come from a concerted effort, not just in "training" members once they were accepted into the fraternity but in carefully screening them before they were offered membership in the first place. Just as with campus activities, Gamma Zeta chapter decided to re-orient itself in relation to scholarship, and Worthy Master David Wade wrote to Stewart Daniels about the new scholarship plan in October of 1958. He noted that potential members were now being evaluated less on their athletic and other activities and more on proof of "satisfactory scholastic achievement" in high school. Once they were accepted into the fraternity, these men were required to participate in "study tables" every Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evening for three hours if their averages dropped below 3.3 on a 5.0 scale. In order to promote a good study environment, the halls of the house would now be kept quiet between 7pm and 6am and the TV set was kept off between 7pm and 7am.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Volume 29, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1957, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶⁴ Volume 27, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1956, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶⁵ Volume 28, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1956, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶⁶ David Wade to Stewart Daniels, October 9, 1958, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

The scholarship issue also proved central to ATO's efforts to expand the chapter house, a movement that had been underway since 1954 when the fraternity bought a tract of land from the University.¹⁶⁷ It took nearly four years for funding for the addition to be secured, so ground was not broken until October of 1958. Original bids on the three-story addition were far too expensive, so the plans were scaled down to a structure that would increase the house capacity to 74 men. The most important element in the new addition, as several chapter publications stressed, was the new study rooms which would enable the undergraduate members to improve their scholarship. The addition, which cost \$165,000, would also provide a new kitchen and housemother's quarters for Mrs. Marietta Klatte, who took over the position in the fall of 1959.¹⁶⁸

The new chapter house addition, named the Jack Powers Wing after Building Fund Chairman Jack Powers '17, was formally dedicated on October 17, 1959 by Elwyn Simmons '20. ATO Worthy Grand Chief Gerald E. Johnson visited the house on the weekend of the Army-Illinois football game that fall and enjoyed the chapter's traditional pre-game luncheon at the house, which the active and alumni members were proud to show off. Simmons was confident that the new, more spacious house would enable "the academic record of our undergraduate members" to be "reestablished to equal that of the top chapters on the Campus."¹⁶⁹ The dedication of the Jack Powers Wing was a fitting end to a decade in which Gamma Zeta chapter had grown in both size and awareness of its position on the University of Illinois campus, in the process rededicating itself to campus involvement and scholastic achievement.

¹⁶⁷ "U.I. Will Sell Tract to ATO for Addition," *Champaign-Urbana Courier*; "Trustees Okay Sale of Tract to ATO Frat," *Champaign News-Gazette*, September 30, 1954, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶⁸ Volume 30, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1959, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁶⁹ Volume 31, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1959, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

The 1960s: Gamma Zeta Meets the World

Early in 1960, Gamma Zeta chapter held a reception to show off the new Jack Powers Wing and to welcome their housemother, Mrs. Klatte.¹⁷⁰ The chapter had never had a housemother before, but Mrs. Klatte's presence (and that of subsequent housemothers in the 1960s) seems to have been a welcome enhancement to the chapter, especially in terms of social events for which she served as hostess. Housemothers throughout the decade expressed the hope that their undergraduate "boys" would party a bit less and study a bit more, but the traditional imbalance between these two activities did not miraculously disappear with the construction of new study rooms. Just prior to the start of the Fall 1960 semester, Worthy Master Roy Rodgers wrote to all active members of Gamma Zeta chapter with a stiff warning about grades, which still hovered below the University's All-Men's Average and forced the fraternity to remain on National Social Probation. Rodgers reminded members that they had pledged at a "top house" but warned, "we are not going to leave it that way at this rate. To many of us are satisfied with mediocrity – and certainly ATO stands for more than that. We are failing ourselves and our fraternity."¹⁷¹ In a separate letter to National Executive Secretary and Gamma Zeta alumnus Stewart Daniels, Rodgers confessed that the general "attitude" in the house was poor, referencing the satisfaction with mediocrity of which he had accused his brothers.¹⁷² This charge – that Gamma Zeta was content to simply rest on its laurels – would be brought up more and more in the coming years by ATO leadership consultants, concerned alumni, and sometimes even the active members themselves. The accusation of mediocrity usually proved very useful in forcing the active chapter into a renewed pursuit of excellence, just as the memory of Thomas Arkle Clark and his high ideals had spurred earlier generations of Gamma Zeta brothers into action.

¹⁷⁰ Volume 31, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1960, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁷¹ Roy Rodgers to the active chapter, August 2, 1960, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

¹⁷² Roy Rodgers to Stewart Daniels, August 4, 1960, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

In fact, the chapter made very quick improvements in the scholarship area, raising its grade point average standing to third among fraternities and an impressive sixth overall on campus in the Fall of 1960. The active members credited their new study rooms as well as a renewed commitment to scholarship, illustrating that Rodgers' pre-semester appeal to the fraternity's reputation must have struck a chord. Individual Gamma Zeta members distinguished themselves in the classroom during this time period as well, a situation which certainly helped the chapter's overall scholastic standing. Ev Thomas '62 was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, reportedly the first Gamma Zeta member since 1951 to win this particular honor, and Charleton Jones '62 was elected to Tau Beta Pi engineering honorary.¹⁷³ The chapter also seemed to be intent on continuing this scholastic improvement. The minutes of an informal chapter meeting from May 1961 report a recommendation that the chapter not pledge men who did not place in the upper one-quarter of their high school classes, and one brother reminded the others that the house needed to achieve at least a 3.5 average to stay off of national social probation.¹⁷⁴

The chapter managed to stay out of scholastic trouble for the rest of 1961, but by August of 1962 the active brothers received yet another letter with familiar themes: the chapter had again dropped in scholarship, meaning that a good Rush would be even harder to accomplish when school reconvened in the fall.¹⁷⁵ Despite the fact that the University's student population was growing, the number of men going through Rush each year was actually decreasing. This situation was obviously of great concern to the fraternities themselves and affected the way that they approached Rush and other chapter activities, because in the University of Illinois' huge Greek system many houses were competing for an ever-shrinking pool of new members. The November 1961 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* reprinted an article written by Dean of Fraternity

¹⁷³ Volume 32, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1961, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of Informal Chapter Meeting, May 15, 1961, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

¹⁷⁵ Don Snodgrass to active brothers, August 10, 1962, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

Men Eldon E. Park, commenting on the need for fraternities to get serious about improving their scholarship and pay less attention to intramural athletics and social functions. The reason for this change, Park stressed, came not only from the ultra-competitive nature of Rush but also from a new breed of university student: “Today, students are weighing the use of their time much more carefully. They will not join or remain with an organization which uses their time carelessly or meaninglessly.” Park also wisely reminded all fraternity members that “...fraternities were not founded to build better fraternities; they were founded to develop better men,” a statement with which Thomas Arkle Clark would have whole-heartedly agreed.¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately, by October of 1962 Gamma Zeta chapter was again placed on scholastic probation by the national organization for its failure to maintain a grade point average higher than the University’s All-Men’s Average, and ATO Educational Advisor Harold C. Welsh wrote to Worth Master Donald Snodgrass to express his disappointment at this regression so soon after a vast improvement. Welsh wondered whether the chapter had not become “careless” and sought to rest on its past achievements rather than continue to strive for more.¹⁷⁷ When the chapter failed to materially improve its scholastic standing by the following year, the ATO national office took the step of placing Gamma Zeta on social probation, a penalty which included some fairly strict changes to the chapter’s traditional lifestyle. The terms of probation forbade Gamma Zeta from participating in any social calendar events as guests or hosts, on campus or off; there were to be no female guests entertained in the house other than mothers; all Rushing parties were to be “stag,” no exceptions; and only members whose grade point averages were either equal to or above the University’s All-Men’s Average were to be eligible for chapter

¹⁷⁶ Volume 23, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1961, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁷⁷ Harold C. Welsh to Donald Snodgrass, October 8, 1962, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

offices.¹⁷⁸ Gamma Zeta toiled under these social restrictions for the 1963-1964 academic year, but by the fall of 1964 the chapter had made substantial improvements and ranked fourteenth out of fifty-nine fraternities. In September of 1964, Worthy Master Dick Murphy wrote to all the active members and informed them that the scholastic improvement would allow the chapter to be taken off social probation and "...regain the #1 social spot which we have held for decades."¹⁷⁹ While this was perhaps not the precise attitude toward scholarship that the national office hoped to instill with its probation, Gamma Zeta chapter did manage to maintain acceptable levels of scholarship for the remainder of the decade *and* keep up its "social spot" on campus. The chapter sought to keep scholarship high by introducing cash incentives for excellent and improved performance and also instituted a "red tag" system on the room doors of those who were supposed to be studying: if the tags were broken before study hours ended, the room's occupant was subject to fines.¹⁸⁰

In the social arena, the biggest innovation of the 1960s was the advent of a "Little Sisters" program for ATO. In September of 1964 the chapter held an organizational meeting for "The Little Sisters of the Maltese Cross," led by Pledge Trainer Bob Adams and Pledge Committee member Rocky Cook. Adams and Cook had already suggested a structure for the organization, complete with officers named for Greek goddesses, regalia, colors, and a ritual. The meeting was designed to acquaint interested girls with the idea and to gauge their enthusiasm for the project.¹⁸¹ There was apparently enough to warrant going forward, and the Fall/Winter 1964 edition of *The Gamma Zeta* described the Little Sisters program in much more

¹⁷⁸ ATO National Office to Gamma Zeta Chapter, October 1963, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 14.

¹⁷⁹ Dick Murphy to Gamma Zeta Chapter, September 1964, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

¹⁸⁰ Volume 38, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, November 1966, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁸¹ "Prospectus" from the organizational meeting of the Little Sisters of the Maltese Cross, September 24, 1964, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

detail for Gamma Zeta alumni. According to the newsletter, the purpose of the Little Sisters of the Maltese Cross was to provide each pledge with a “helper,” who would take him out to dinner and help him with “personal problems” as he moved through his first year as a member of ATO. Although Little Sisters would initially be chosen by the active chapter, their organization would operate independently after that point.¹⁸² The advent of the Little Sisters organization brought some new social and community service activities onto Gamma Zeta’s calendar, including banquets, picnics, a philanthropic car wash, and a Christmas party.¹⁸³ In 1966 the Little Sisters initiated the “Powder Puff” softball game against the She-Gams of Phi Gamma Delta, an event which *The Gamma Zeta* hoped would turn into an annual tradition. The Little Sisters of the Maltese Cross won the inaugural contest 9-8 and all the participants and their fraternity supporters enjoyed a picnic after the game.¹⁸⁴ The Little Sisters organization would become much more visible in the 1970s, but in the 1980s and 1990s most fraternities made policies on a national level outlawing groups of this type, responding to charges that they were degrading to and exploitative of women. Gamma Zeta’s program does not display any symptoms of these problems in the 1960s, but later archival sources referencing the Little Sisters of the Maltese Cross illustrate some of the attitudes which would eventually compel ATO to outlaw the organizations.

ATO kept up its reputation as a “sporting” house in the 1960s as well, and once again boasted not only strong intramural teams but also outstanding individual athletes. In 1962 Bill Small ’63 won the Ralph Woods Memorial Trophy, given annually to the Illinois basketball player with the best free throw percentage in Big Ten play. He joined “Pick” Dehner, Walt Kirk,

¹⁸² Volume 36, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall/Winter 1964, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁸³ Volume 36, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1965, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁸⁴ Volume 37, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1966, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Jim Marks, and Bill Erickson as fellow ATO winners of the award.¹⁸⁵ In 1963-1964 the Illini varsity basketball team (the first team to play a full season in the new Assembly Hall) included six Gamma Zetas, and the Rose Bowl-winning football team had five ATO members. A number of freshmen also gave the fraternity a good representation on the swim team and one of these, Bob Bachman, was proclaimed to be “the greatest swimmer in Illinois history” by his coach Al Kingel. Bachman placed fourth in the 100-yard freestyle event at the NCAA championships in 1964 and was chosen as captain of the team for the 1965-1966 year. Rich Callagan '65, one of the Rose Bowl team members, became only the fifth athlete in Illinois history to win nine varsity letters as a football, wrestling, and baseball standout.¹⁸⁶ Even the house dog, Kusang, saw some playing time during the 1963 football season, when he somehow managed to sneak into Memorial Stadium and ran onto the field during the second quarter of the Purdue game. Unfortunately, Kusang’s surprise entrance prevented the Illini from recovering a ball they had just fumbled, and the *Champaign-Urbana Courier* ran a photograph of the incident and referred to Kusang as “Purdue’s secret weapon.”¹⁸⁷

Perhaps more than in any other decade before or since, the “real world” inserted itself into Gamma Zeta’s world in the 1960s. The most prominent and pressing issue was perhaps the matter of the fraternity’s restrictive membership clause that first emerged at the end of the 1950s, an issue that was linked to the larger struggle for civil and political rights for African-Americans across the United States but especially in the South. In 1961 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sent a “Statement of Position” on the discriminatory membership practices of University of Illinois fraternities and sororities to all chapters on

¹⁸⁵ Volume 33, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1962, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁸⁶ Volume 35, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1963; Volume 35, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1964; Volume 36, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1965, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁸⁷ Volume 35, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, December 1963, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

campus, and Gamma Zeta Worthy Master Larry Austermilller passed the information on to ATO Executive Secretary Stewart Daniels. Although no commentary from either Austermilller or Daniels accompanies this exchange of information, the position statement itself is very interesting for what it reveals about the outlook and tactics of the NAACP at this juncture in the civil rights movement. Specifically, the position statement expresses the NAACP's recognition that prejudice of all sorts can and will exist at an individual level, and the group asserts that its primary goal – at least at this juncture - was *not* to fight this fact. What the organization did want, however, was for institutional structures of racism and discrimination to be replaced with truly open opportunities for all students. The statement read, in part:

“We are trying to establish freedom of choice. We merely insist that if there is to be discrimination, the act of discrimination should occur on the level of the individual black-ball placed in the box by the individual undergraduate member, with full recognition of his responsibility. As things stand now, the ‘system’ does the black-balling for the individual . . . What we are concerned with is discrimination on the organizational level. No organization that is approved by the University can have the perpetuation of racism as one of its goals.”¹⁸⁸

The NAACP believed that, in the area of membership selection, all undergraduate fraternity and sorority chapters should be free from the pressures exerted upon them by national groups and alumni, specifically bringing up the issue of “local autonomy” that had previously been discussed at the 1954 ATO National Congress in Atlanta. In the late 1950s, ATO had created a “Committee on the Study of Selectivity” to more fully consider the question of restrictive membership clauses, and the committee ultimately recommended no changes to the fraternity’s selectivity clause. In addition, the Committee suggested that ATO take steps to legally support chapters which were “threatened” by campus regulations requiring them to open their membership. At the 1960 ATO Congress, the fraternity decided to grant any “threatened” chapter a “waiver clause,” allowing it to petition the fraternity’s High Council to waive any

¹⁸⁸ NAACP “Statement of Position,” November 1961, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

membership requirements that had been deemed discriminatory by its home university “for so long as might be deemed necessary.” Gamma Zeta’s experience on the Illinois campus provides an illustration of the circumstances which, from ATO’s perspective, necessitated the “waiver clause.” In 1962, all fraternity and sorority chapters at Illinois were required to submit a “Statement of Fraternity Membership Qualifications and Requirements” for a combined Rush booklet published by the IFC, whose purpose was to address the public concern about Greek membership discrimination. Gamma Zeta submitted the following information for the publication:

“ATO offers a congenial fellowship of men genuinely interested in you and your future, home-like surroundings with those who strive for scholastic excellence, encouragement in campus activities and athletics, help in developing your leadership potential, and an enjoyable, well-balanced social experience conforming with the standards of good taste and Christian living.

Students from secondary schools, ranked in the upper two-thirds of their class scholastically, who are acceptable to members of the Fraternity are eligible for pledging. A cumulative ‘C’ or its numerical equivalent is required for full membership. Those belonging to other general college fraternities are ineligible for membership in Alpha Tau Omega.”¹⁸⁹

In 1968, ATO historian Harry Biro wrote that before passing the measure, ATO had been assured that it would “be acceptable to colleges which had set deadlines for repeal of what they called ‘discriminatory’ membership policies.” He also reported that, “Adequate safeguards were established to assure continuation of ATO’s traditional membership character.”¹⁹⁰ At the 1962 Congress, the fraternity heard a proposal to permanently amend the membership clause to eliminate the words “white” and “Christian,” effectively granting the previously-decreed waiver to *all* chapters and also allowing new ones to form. All chapters, however, were expected to (in Biro’s words), “...elect officers who would ‘keep before every chapter its obligation to select as

¹⁸⁹ Gamma Zeta “Statement of Fraternity Membership Qualifications and Requirements,” January 1962, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

¹⁹⁰ Harry T. Biro, *The ATO Story: On to the Centennial!* (1968), 208; 232.

members persons actually acceptable to all Alpha Taus.”¹⁹¹ Despite much discussion at the 1962 and 1963 Congresses, the membership clause issue was not resolved until 1964, when ATO decided to emphasize “good scholarship and high moral standards” as requirements for membership, dropping the stipulation that members also had to be “white” and “Christian.”

While Biro’s statements about “adequate safeguards” and “persons actually acceptable” are purposefully vague, it is fairly obvious that some ATOs were not prepared to accept real changes in membership for many years after the fraternity officially abandoned its history of racial and religious exclusivity. The membership statement that Gamma Zeta chapter prepared in 1962 illustrates this attitude as well, as it skillfully mentions “Christian living” rather than stipulating that members must *be* Christians and echoes Biro’s guarded language by stressing that potential members must be “acceptable to the members of the Fraternity.” The terms of this acceptability were not spelled out and perhaps did not need to be in order to be understood by ATO members and chapter officers. These vague guarantees of “open” membership, which were acceptable to the University at the time, actually allowed ATO and other organizations to maintain a large measure of control over who they initiated into membership. Despite further, more precise regulations about discrimination in housing and student organizations passed by the University of Illinois in the later 1960s and afterwards, most Greek organizations on campus retained their “traditional” membership character, including Jewish, African-American, and “white” houses.

There is some indication, however, that perhaps not all ATOs or all Gamma Zetas opposed the idea of change in the fraternity, including in its membership composition. In April of 1963, Worthy Master Robert B. Adams included a serious message to alumni in an edition of *The Gamma Zeta*. In it, he noted that “the cannons of criticism” had been aimed at the

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 249-251.

traditional fraternity institution, making it necessary for a precise course of action to be taken. Adams saw two options: for the fraternity to answer the challenge by “proving our worth,” or for it to “bow gracefully...and exit slowly from the stage.” Adams ended his short article with a provocative challenge:

“We must not let this commonly shared experience blind us to the fact that not everyone understands or views the fraternity system in the same manner as we do...We must not regard our fraternity as perfect and above constructive change.”¹⁹²

Although Adams’ vision of “change” is, admittedly, as purposefully vague as Biro’s, his words seem to point in an opposite direction. It is difficult to assess the intention behind this short article simply by reading it, but in light of other changes occurring on the Illinois campus at the time, it is certainly possible that Adams was attempting to signal to alumni that the active chapter was ready to comply with the push for non-discrimination in more than a simply superficial manner. In 1968, Gamma Zeta chapter filled out an ATO Congress report and, in answer to the question “Does your chapter have any comments regarding the policies and administration of Alpha Tau Omega?,” responded “We need to have local autonomy in regards to selection of members if we are going to stay on campus.”¹⁹³ The motivation behind this response is, again, difficult to gauge, but it *does* indicate that even after ATO had officially changed its membership policy, local chapters were still running into difficulties in satisfying the non-discrimination regulations set down by colleges and universities. Gamma Zeta’s answer to this question indicates a willingness to comply with University of Illinois policies (even if the motivation for compliance was self-preservation) at a time when the national organization remained hesitant to change its traditional ways. The complicated issue of ATO membership, which became so prominent in the late 1950s and 1960s, is an excellent window through which to examine not

¹⁹² Volume 34, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, April 1963, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁹³ ATO Congress Report of Gamma Zeta, May 1968, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

only the large social changes that were sweeping the United States but also the continual struggle between alumni expectations and active experiences within the fraternity itself.

By the second half of the 1960s, another “real world” event had inserted itself into Gamma Zeta’s world, in a tragic way. On May 12, 1966, ATO football star Bruce Capel ’65 was killed in Vietnam when the Marine patrol that he was leading was ambushed by two hundred Viet Cong. At the time, he had been in Vietnam for only two months, and he had gotten engaged just prior to leaving for duty. His death was announced in *The Gamma Zeta* and several awards and funds were set up in his memory, including a fund set up by his church in Glen Ellyn to aid South Vietnamese orphans, and an award created by his Rose Bowl teammates to honor the Illinois football player who, in the opinion of the coaches, “best typifies ‘exceptional courage.’”¹⁹⁴ Vietnam turned out to be a very different war from either World War I or World War II and did not touch Gamma Zeta as extensively or deeply, but Capel’s death was as shocking and sobering as the larger loss of life from these previous wars, especially for those who had recently seen him excelling on the gridiron in the prime of youth. In many ways, the events of the 1960s proved that ATO and Gamma Zeta chapter could not exist apart from the “real world,” and the next few decades illustrate the adjustments and struggles that the fraternity had to go through in order to align itself with this reality.

The 1970s: The Challenge of Apathy

Of all the decades surveyed for this history of Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega, the 1970s seems to be the most afflicted by a certain malaise and apathy. The fraternity continued to change during this time, but some of the changes – such as eliminating specific academic guidelines, getting rid of the housemother, and turning the formal Chapter Room into a

¹⁹⁴ Volume 37, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1966, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

recreation area – would be regarded by later Gamma Zeta generations as poorly thought-out mistakes. An especially striking feature of the 1970s is the numerous times that fines and other disciplinary measures were reported as being necessary to compel brothers to participate in activities such as Rush, exchanges, and community service projects, whereas in the past they had either participated willingly or out of a sense of duty. Many archival sources point to the fact that active-alumni relations also suffered in this decade, as it seemed to many that the undergraduates and the alumni had moved very far apart in their expectations for the fraternity and its position on campus. Gamma Zeta alumni still remained an essential part of the fraternity’s existence, because the chapter house and grounds seemed to be in a constant state of disrepair and their financial support was desperately needed. In 1972, Gamma Zeta actives begged alumni to make a renewed commitment to the House Corporation, because their presence on the Corporation board had severely fallen off in recent years. The undergraduates pointed out that the only successful fraternities at Illinois were the ones in which alumni members continued to be active and supportive.¹⁹⁵ House bills and other fraternity fees rose throughout the decade in keeping with the rising cost of living, and ATO and other fraternities also had to contend with a growing trend toward apartment living that lessened the attractiveness of living in the house for some brothers. In the end, Gamma Zeta seemed to “limp” through the 1970s rather than gain substantial ground, but the chapter managed to maintain its reputation as one of the leading fraternities on the University of Illinois campus.

In 1970, *The Gamma Zeta* reported that the active chapter had decided that they did not need a housemother anymore because they had “matured enough so that we are able to take care of ourselves.”¹⁹⁶ Some of their subsequent decisions without the watchful eye of a mother-figure

¹⁹⁵ Volume 43, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, August 1972, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁹⁶ Volume 41, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1970, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

might have given some alumni pause, but there is no record of protest when the active chapter installed a pinball machine and a beer machine and voted to refurnish the Chapter Room as a study room during the week and party room on the weekends.¹⁹⁷ Apparently the latter project was not actually taken up until 1973, and at this point the active chapter used *The Gamma Zeta* to inform alumni of the impending change, and also to point out that ATO was one of the few fraternities on campus that still retained a room solely for the purpose of chapter meetings. The plan called for the Chapter Room to be redecorated for three distinct uses: a pool table area, a card area with a bar, and a lounge area with pinball machines. The actives were confident that the redecoration of the Chapter Room would "...be quite an asset to the physical plant of the house, plus provide a lot of enjoyment for the active brothers."¹⁹⁸ The decision to change the Chapter Room from a closed, formal space to a social one is consistent with Gamma Zeta's drift away from the use of formal ATO ritual and practices, which seemed to begin in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the chapter had to report to ATO Leadership Consultants that it rarely used formal ritual for activities such as initiation and officer installation, and it held formal chapter meetings only a few times a year, if that. Leadership Consultants sent to evaluate the chapter would often comment on this situation in their reports and suggest that a return to formal ATO rituals would help to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among members, but it was not until the 1990s that any of the suggestions seem to have been taken seriously.

Leadership Consultants from the national office of ATO appeared to first visit Gamma Zeta in the 1970s, as fraternities on the whole became a bit more bureaucratic and regulatory. The annual Leadership Consultant visits to all ATO chapters were part of this movement, and their reports provide an interesting "outsider" insight into Gamma Zeta in the 1970s. One of the

¹⁹⁷ Minutes of Informal Chapter Meeting, October 26, 1970; Minutes of Chapter Meeting, November 2, 1970; Minutes of Informal Chapter Meeting, November 23, 1970, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

¹⁹⁸ Volume 43, No. 4 of *The Gamma Zeta*, May 1973, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

earliest reports of the decade was filed by Sonny Cassady in October 1971, and it was not positive. Cassady reported that the house as a whole was “not responsive” to his visit and seemed to have little concern for other visitors as well. Also, he felt that despite being a very large house, Gamma Zeta had “really done nothing outstanding to let its name be known in the community.” Cassady’s final assessment was blunt: “To put it frankly, the men are somewhat conceited.” It was clear from his report that Cassady found little reason for the chapter to think so highly of itself, and he recommended that changes in “attitude” should immediately be made.¹⁹⁹ By the next year, the chapter’s “social bearing” and response to visitors had certainly been improved (likely because of Cassady’s scathing report), and Leadership Consultant Bob Russell was more favorably impressed by Gamma Zeta. He did recommend that the chapter put more emphasis on “house operations” and campus activities rather than simply intramural sports; his assessment was that a small number of men did the majority of the work to keep the house running, while the rest simply played sports.²⁰⁰

ATO Leadership Consultants who visited Gamma Zeta in the 1970s were often critical, but they were also impressed by the chapter’s potential and offered constructive suggestions for ways in which it could use its human resources in more positive directions. After his visit in September of 1975, Douglas Van Leuven wrote to the chapter and suggested that it institute a “Good of the Order” program after every chapter meeting, giving all members a chance to voice their opinions on any subject. One of Van Leuven’s observations about the chapter was that pledges and younger members were still treated as “second-class citizens” and were not allowed to have a voice; he believed that a “Good of the Order” program would help to change this imbalance. He also suggested that the chapter channel its strong “competitive” nature toward a

¹⁹⁹ Visitation report by Sonny Cassady, October 12-13, 1971, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁰ Visitation report by Bob Russell, October 11-13, 1972, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

social service project rather than simply athletic events, and offered the idea of a competitive campus-wide blood drive for the American Red Cross.²⁰¹ Although the chapter did not immediately put this suggestion into action, Gamma Zeta did go on to sponsor an impressively-successful campus blood drive for many years in the 1980s and 1990s. It is likely that the active chapter met the Leadership Consultants' visits with both indifference and apprehension throughout the 1970s, but it is clear that at least some of the critiques and suggestions offered by these alumni men brought about positive change in the fraternity.

Even though local alumni participation in organizations such as the House Corporation may have suffered in the early 1970s, Gamma Zeta and other ATO chapters were increasingly required to keep in better contact with the fraternity's national office and were therefore "on the radar" of many important ATO alumni. This situation may have been particularly true of Gamma Zeta because the ATO headquarters were located in Champaign, so any issues connected to the chapter were quickly relayed to the national headquarters. Throughout the 1970s, Gamma Zeta regularly sent copies of its chapter meeting minutes to the national office, where they were reviewed by staff and filed. Most of these meeting minutes appear to have passed through the official channels without comment, but toward the latter part of the decade there were several items that gave the national office pause. On October 17, 1977, the Informal Chapter meeting minutes reported "Thursday is the Little Sister Lock-In," a notation that was vigorously circled in blue ink with a large question mark beside it. The minutes from the next meeting, held on October 31, contained the presumably offhand statement, "Since we couldn't find any waiters this semester, it was decided that pledges will wait on tables." A reader named Kevin underlined

²⁰¹ Visitation report and correspondence by Douglas Van Leuven, September 7-16, 1975, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

this sentence in red and inquired, “Hazing?,” to which a Mark responded “YES!” in blue ink.²⁰² Hazing, and fraternities’ responses to it, was becoming an increasingly important issue in Greek life at this time, and ATO had long prided itself on being a leader in eliminating the most brutal and sophomoric forms of hazing practiced by Greek organizations. Gamma Zeta chapter had publicly announced its opposition to hazing earlier in the decade, when Worthy Master Marty Wade wrote in *The Gamma Zeta* that eliminating hazing would allow the chapter to not only attract better men but also to “build more respect among the members of our chapter.”²⁰³ In 1974, *The Gamma Zeta* explained that the abolishment of the old “Hell Week” has allowed the chapter to use the week prior to initiation as an instructional time for learning about ATO history and policies, and for the pledges to clean up around the chapter house.²⁰⁴ In 1977, however, a set of Gamma Zeta chapter meeting minutes submitted to the national office stated that “Hell Night is November 13 at 8pm,” prompting another round of circling and angry question marks from the anonymous reader.²⁰⁵ These materials illustrate both the growing concern about hazing in the fraternity and the difficulty that the ATO national office had in policing affairs in the active chapters, including Gamma Zeta. Written or stated policies had little teeth until the national office chose to enforce them through sanctions or probation, as most chapters preferred to operate based on notions of “tradition” rather than according to rules imposed from above, whether that higher power represented the university or ATO headquarters.

Another aspect of Gamma Zeta’s day-to-day life that seemed to be faltering in the 1970s was the Little Sisters program, which was proving to be more of a hassle to the brothers than a help. In the early part of the decade there were several motions to abolish the program because

²⁰² Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, October 17 and 31, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰³ Volume 41, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, June 1970, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁴ Volume 44, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, July 1974, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁵ Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, November 6, 1977, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

of the “attitude” of both the Little Sisters and the chapter, but these motions were defeated and the program continued with pledges from both sides to be more energetic.²⁰⁶ In 1972 the chapter decided that the Little Sisters should be in charge of organizing all their activities themselves, a move which the Gamma Zeta members hoped would increase the group’s activity.²⁰⁷ Archival records show that the Little Sisters did organize Christmas parties and car washes for community service and enjoyed exchanges and other social events with the Gamma Zeta brothers, including a “pajama party” and “sleepovers” such as the Little Sister Lock-In that raised some eyebrows at the national office. The 1970s materials also display a hint of the issues that would eventually lead to the abolishment of Little Sister programs by most fraternities, as they responded to charges that these programs encouraged disrespectful attitudes toward women. In the March 1972 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, current active member Mark McQuality, reporting on the recent expansion of the Little Sisters program, quipped that “In this manner, everyone gets a piece of the action.”²⁰⁸ In 1978, the chapter apparently sponsored an activity called “Slave Day,” when the Little Sisters were paid \$2 per hour for “any job you need doing (within reason).”²⁰⁹ The 1980s would bring more rhetoric of this type about the Little Sisters and their “duties,” until the program was eventually outlawed at the end of the decade.

Despite these challenges, the 1970s were not an entirely negative time for Gamma Zeta chapter. Intramural sports continued to play a large role in the chapter’s life, and its teams scored some notable successes throughout the decade. In 1973-1974, Gamma Zeta won the intramural All-Points Trophy for the first time since 1968-1969, and repeated this feat in 1974-

²⁰⁶ Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, September 21, 1970 and October 5, 1970, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁷ Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, February 21, 1972, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁸ Volume 43, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, March 1972, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁰⁹ Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, November 13, 1978, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

1975.²¹⁰ In 1978 the *Daily Illini* published an article that solidified ATO's reputation as the most feared athletic power in the Greek system, and the chapter proudly reprinted its praises for years to come. The article, entitled "The team fans love to hate just rolls on," compared ATO to the New York Yankees and noted that Gamma Zeta's reputation as a "jock house" had blessed them with a number of devoted female followers, "many of whom have the ATO letters sewed on the seat of their pants." The article went on to enumerate some of the more "fantastic rumors" that "jealousy" had inspired about ATO:

"Among the wildest fallacies are that football players get fined if they miss a practice, a rushee can only pledge if he has been an all-conference athlete in high school, and most Taus would rather watch Monday Night Football than socialize at an exchange."²¹¹

ATO members proved themselves to be avid sports fans as well as participants. In 1978, almost half of the members of the Orange Krush basketball cheering section were ATOs, and the chapter opted for a non-coed football block with Beta Theta Pi, enabling them to "be more interested" in the games and also to "be more rowdy." An added bonus to this arrangement, apparently, was that they did not have to entertain a sorority before or after the games!²¹² In 1976 Gamma Zeta sponsored a football tournament with chapters from Minnesota, Illinois State, and Western Illinois, followed by a fried chicken lunch, story swapping, and then a "wild party."²¹³

Individual Gamma Zeta members were involved in a variety of activities throughout the 1970s, including some new and intriguing ones. In 1979, Dave Teuscher was elected as

²¹⁰ "Alpha Tau Omega" Rush Booklet, 1975, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹¹ Volume 48, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall/Winter 1978, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹² Annual Report 1978-1979, May 1979

²¹³ Volume 46, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1976, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

alderman for the 1st Ward in Urbana, and John Aymond was elected as IFC President.²¹⁴ Other members were involved in musicals, IFC committees, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, academic honoraries, and the Student Health Board. The chapter won several Chapter Excellence Awards from ATO in the 1970s, and in 1976 it built a new trophy case in the house to showcase its many awards throughout the years.²¹⁵ In 1977, the Philbrick Scholarships honoring Frederick C. Philbrick '15 were established by his wife Edna. They were designed to be awarded to a full-time Gamma Zeta active who maintained a grade point average above the all-men's university average and displayed leadership in both campus and fraternity activities. The first three winners of the \$800.00 awards were Craig Nadborne, Bob Anderson, and Brendan Lynch.²¹⁶ In terms of overall scholarship, Gamma Zeta managed to maintain a much better record than in the 1960s, and there is no evidence that the chapter was put on either scholastic or social probation in these years. Academic regulations in the decade varied from the very stringent (enforced study hours, upper-class "academic advisors" for pledges, mandatory class scheduling meetings) to the relatively lax (no enforced study hours, reliance on incentives such as the "Chapter Roll" room assignment system). The chapter attempted to revive an old tradition of faculty dinners in order to promote better relations between students and faculty, and also expanded their scope to include, in 1975, basketball coach Gene Bartow and swimming coach Don Sammons.²¹⁷ For the first time, ATO publications and award applications heavily stressed the chapter's "file system," referring to it as "an academic resource...not available to the average student."²¹⁸ The traditional fraternity file system, typically containing old tests, papers, and

²¹⁴ Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, January 23/29, 1979, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹⁵ Volume 46, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1976, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹⁶ Volume 46, No.3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1977; Minutes from Informal Chapter Meeting, August 30, 1977, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹⁷ Volume 44, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, January 1975, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²¹⁸ Pledge Training Booklet, c. 1972, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

notes for a variety of classes, certainly walks a fine line between being an academic resource and a source of academic dishonesty, but Gamma Zeta's reliance on this system never raised any eyebrows in the national office. In fact, at least one Leadership Consultant complimented the chapter on its excellent file system in his annual report, and the files continue to play an important role in Gamma Zeta's scholarship program to the present day.

Despite the somewhat negative start to the 1970s, Gamma Zeta chapter emerged from the decade with a healthy membership and no grave financial difficulties, both of which were recipes for future success. There is also evidence that active-alumni relations were improved by the creation of a Big Brother-Little Brother program in 1978. Although the chapter's history in the 1980s demonstrates that some of the problems encountered in the 1970s did not go away, Gamma Zeta always seemed to find able actives and alumni to guide it through tough spots. In the 1980s, fraternities all across the country finally had to confront issues such as hazing and alcohol abuse head-on, and Gamma Zeta of ATO was no exception.

The 1980s: Change from Above and Below

In 1985, ATO Leadership Consultant Mark Stephens concluded his report on Gamma Zeta chapter by proclaiming it "a chapter of contrasts." His visit to Illinois in April of that year had left him disappointed and he felt that the chapter, although it had won one of ATO's prestigious True Merit Awards in 1984, had many current practices "not consistent with True Merit." Stephens specifically cited pledge education, which still relied primarily on techniques widely recognized as hazing by both ATO and the University, the non-existent use of ritual, and the fact that the chapter's collective grade point average was below the all-fraternity average as

evidence that the chapter's members were not "practicing what they preach."²¹⁹ He acknowledged that ATO was still a respected fraternity on the Illinois campus, but he cautioned that it could not expect to hold this position for long until some changes were made. Unfortunately, there are many sources in Gamma Zeta's archival record in the 1980s that support this viewpoint of a fraternity that presented an attractive "official" face but harbored a less-than-attractive core. A Leadership Consultant in 1981 had suggested that the chapter needed to have "better goals and better monitoring of these goals" as well as a stronger chapter advisor from the alumni ranks, but he was generally positive about Gamma Zeta's direction at that time.²²⁰

On the surface, things did indeed seem good. In 1981 and 1982 Gamma Zeta hosted the first annual Miss University of Illinois beauty pageant to benefit the American Cancer Society, sponsored a blood drive, and participated in a crime prevention and house safety program with the City of Urbana, during which they passed out informational pamphlets to the community. During the 1980s Gamma Zeta became heavily involved with the Special Olympics and earned the organization's praise for its help with the annual track meet. The chapter also invited all fraternity and sorority presidents to a talk by Eileen Stevens, a national "pro-fraternity, anti-hazing advocate," who discussed the educational organization that she founded after her son was killed in a hazing incident. After winning the Frat Blue league title in football, the Gamma Zeta team was invited to represent Illinois in the "Sugar Bowl Classic," a national intramural football tournament held prior to the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.²²¹ ATO teams would continue to participate in this event – and finish in the top five – throughout the 1980s. Individual members were active in IFC, Star Course, student government, the Board of Fraternity Affairs, and various

²¹⁹ Visitation report by Mark P. Stephens, April 15-17, 1985, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁰ Mark Michlem, Leadership Consultant, to Gamma Zeta chapter, June 10, 1981, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/91/1, Box 49.

²²¹ Volume 51, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1981, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

academic honoraries.²²² Terry Cole and Mike Stine were on the varsity football team, and Bryan Leonard, Mike O'Brien, and Doug Altenberger suited up for the varsity basketball team.²²³ In 1983, the chapter's Worthy Sentinel Jeff Burkett was elected as Student Government Vice President, and Public Relations Officer Bill Forsyth was elected as Junior Class President and alternate Chief Illiniwek, a position that he would go on to hold in 1984.²²⁴ Faculty and community dinners hosted by Gamma Zeta on Wednesday nights had brought the Urbana and University police chiefs to the house along with alumni, professors, deans, counselors, Little Sisters, and in 1984, University of Illinois President Stan Ikenberry.²²⁵ Scholarship remained respectable, despite the fact that the chapter had at some point done away with mandatory study hours and other academic assistance, asserting that "we are a group of adults who do not need to be told how or when to study."²²⁶ One of the innovations of the 1980s was the house's purchase of an IBM computer to help with bookkeeping, statistics, and personal education. The computer was quickly connected to the University's Cyber system and the library's LCS system, and the brothers also reported that they were "...enjoying the use of Lotus 1-2-3 and Wordprocessing software."²²⁷ As always, the chapter boasted some high individual achievers, such as Bill Forsyth who won the national organization's Thomas Arkle Clark Award in 1986, the first Gamma Zeta in a long time to do so. Forsyth met all the award's credentials, including scholarship (4.93 out of 5.0 grade point average), fraternity leadership and service (pledge class president, and several other chapter offices), non-fraternity leadership and service (Junior IFC President and Judicial Board Chairman, Chief Illiniwek, Homecoming King, Top 10 Senior,

²²² 1980-1981 Rush Booklet, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²³ Volume 52, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1982, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁴ Volume 53, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1983; Volume 54, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring/Summer 1984, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁵ Volume 52, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1982; Annual Report for 1983-1984, May 1984, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁶ Annual Report for 1984-1985, June 1985, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁷ Volume 55, No. 3 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring/Summer 1985, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

coach for the Special Olympics, usher at St. John's Catholic Church), and "manly character and personality."²²⁸

Considering these accomplishments, it is easy to see why Gamma Zeta was designated as a True Merit chapter in both 1982 and 1984. Looking at other materials from the same time period, however, presents a slightly different picture. In 1981, the chapter received an angry letter from Patrick Brown, Worthy Grand Chief of ATO. Several Gamma Zeta pledges had been accused of stealing T-shirts from the bookstore at Southern Methodist University in Dallas (likely during a "pledge walkout"), and Brown warned the chapter that although no action would be taken at the moment, any further misconduct would be "...dealt with in accordance with the strictest possible interpretation of the Constitution and Laws."²²⁹ While the chapter seems to have suffered no permanent censure for this incident, its reputation within ATO was certainly harmed. Later in the decade, Professor of Education Kenneth Monteiro fired off angry letters to several University and ATO officials after he was attacked on campus by a student with a squirt gun. The car into which the student ran after the attack was later identified as registered to Gamma Zeta member David Alexander, who denied any involvement and also dismissed the incident as a "college prank."²³⁰ Again, no disciplinary action seems to have been taken against either the fraternity or the individual involved in this incident, but Monteiro's wide-ranging letters surely caused Gamma Zeta some embarrassment in the University and ATO communities. In 1987, Leadership Consultant Phil Bender noted that "public relations were poor" in the chapter, and these two examples serve as an illustration of this assessment.²³¹

²²⁸ Volume 57, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1986, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²²⁹ Patrick Brown to Gamma Zeta chapter, January 26, 1981, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²³⁰ Kenneth Monteiro to Vice Chancellor Stanley Levy, June 30, 1987, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²³¹ Chapter Visit Report, February 23-24, 1987, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Although Gamma Zeta compiled an impressive record of community service and philanthropy in the early 1980s, raising support and money for a variety of causes, there is evidence that the chapter's true commitment to these activities was sometimes rather hollow. Annual reports filed by the chapter in 1982 and 1983 admitted that community service activities were not well-attended and that perhaps only 20% of the members participated in them on a regular basis, with the notable exception of the Little Sisters car wash (one *Gamma Zeta* article offered that the brothers enjoyed "wetting down the Little Sisters that helped") and the ATO charity basketball tournament, which drew 100% participation.²³² In 1980, the chapter's social services chairmen even devised a "clever" plan for fulfilling Gamma Zeta's obligations in a canned food drive: when the brothers proved unenthusiastic about the project, they instead "kidnapped" a sorority girl and forced her sisters to bring forty canned goods to "ransom" her. This tactic was apparently repeated several times in the early part of the decade.²³³ *The Gamma Zeta* newsletter also displays evidence of the active chapter's "true colors" during the 1980s, as the tone of articles written by the undergraduates changed noticeably. Whereas in the past news from the active chapter was always presented professionally and respectfully, in the 1980s these articles were full of inside jokes, suggestive language, and very little in the way of real news. A good example comes from Pledge Trainer Steve Stewart '88, who reported on his "duties" in this way: "On the top of the list for me, the pledge trainer, this semester, aside from getting a little more action from our friends in the university sorority system, is to 'beef-up' our '50s pledgeship."²³⁴

²³² 1981-1982 Annual Report, May 1982; 1982-1983 Annual Report, April 1983; Volume 49, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1980, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²³³ Volume 49, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1980; 1979-1980 Annual Report, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²³⁴ Volume 58, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Winter/Spring 1987, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

It was perhaps some of these incidents and attitudes that prompted House Corporation President James Dobrovolny to resign his position in the Fall of 1987, a resignation that he chose to explain in a letter in *The Gamma Zeta*. Although he cited undisclosed “personal” reasons for his resignation, Dobrovolny also expressed his belief that respect – for both the Gamma Zeta physical plant and “for each other” – had declined in the chapter since the last housemother was let go in the 1960s. He reminded Gamma Zeta actives and alumni that ATO’s national organization had adopted a statement of position supporting in-house advisors (not necessarily “housemothers”), although he did not go so far as to recommend that Gamma Zeta immediately consider this option.²³⁵ Dobrovolny, interestingly, would go on to play a prominent role on the University’s Board of Greek Affairs, and would therefore have to deal with at least one hazing allegation brought against Gamma Zeta in the 1990s.

Dobrovolny’s resignation from the House Corporation presidency meant that he did *not* have to deal directly with a hazing allegation that surfaced in the spring of 1988. On May 5, Assistant Dean Mark Robinson sent a letter to Gamma Zeta Worthy Master Tim Harding, requesting his presence at a May 12 Board of Fraternity Affairs hearing to discuss the charge that members of the chapter had shaved the pubic hair of another member and then poured paint thinner on his skin. During the hearing, the members of the Board specifically expressed their disappointment with Harding’s leadership, noting that he walked out of the room while the incident was taking place instead of trying to stop it. After the hearing, Gamma Zeta was required to create and submit to the Board of Fraternity Affairs a bylaw specifically outlawing this “tradition,” as well as a plan for the bylaw’s enforcement. The chapter was also asked to submit a written copy of its member education program to the Board to ensure that it entirely complied with the Board’s anti-hazing policy, first promulgated in 1986. All chapter officers

²³⁵ Volume 59, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1987, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

were required to attend leadership training during the summer, and at the end of the training a chapter-wide retreat would examine the “leadership” of the executive board and conclude with a vote of confidence in the officers. In addition to these requirements, ATO members had to agree to co-facilitate a session on hazing at the IFC House Officer Workshop in the fall, and Tim Harding was specifically asked to write a letter on the dangers of hazing and the responsibility of house officers to address the problem.²³⁶

Perhaps it was this incident, coupled with the suggestion made by outgoing House Corporation president James Dobrovolny, that prompted the Corporation to take concrete action at the end of the 1980s. The Corporation had launched a \$400,000 renovation campaign in 1986 and surely felt the need to protect its investment in ATO’s physical plant as well as its human resources. In January of 1989, the Corporation’s officers met and unanimously approved the creation of a Chapter Advisory Committee, expressing the opinion that “it was not in the best interests of the chapter or the House Corporation to continue without formal adult involvement.”²³⁷ One of the first issues taken up by this new Advisory Committee was the formulation of a specific alcohol policy endorsed by the House Corporation, an area in which the Corporation actually lagged significantly behind the University, the IFC, and ATO’s national organization. All of these bodies had previously set down restrictions including guest lists for parties, required University IDs, the provision of alternative food and beverages, the use of twenty-one-year-old bartenders, and a ban on open, “all-campus” parties.²³⁸ In the Fall of 1988 the House Corporation publicly stated its need to adopt a Chapter Alcohol Policy that would “send a positive message to National, alumni, the University and the actives and pledges,” but

²³⁶ David R. Turner, Chair of the Board of Fraternity Affairs, to Tim Harding, June 8, 1988, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²³⁷ Volume 61, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Winter 1989, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²³⁸ Volume 57, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1986, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

minutes from a meeting of the new Chapter Advisory Committee in March 1989 reveal that some members were still skeptical of such a policy's "practicality."²³⁹ The active members had their own worries about the alcohol policy, but these had little to do with "practicality." During a meeting with Director of Alumni Services Bill Griffith, members of the active chapter expressed their fears that a restrictive alcohol policy would make them less competitive during Rush compared with other chapters whose national organizations were not pushing through changes. In a letter written after the meeting, Griffith stressed to Gamma Zeta that this particular change was "inevitable," and that they would do better to be on the vanguard side of it, perhaps even "evangelizing" to other fraternities – a move which would surely enhance ATO's status with the University administration. Griffith assured the chapter that he understood that the proposed "dry house" was "...an extremely difficult proposition – it will mean altering attitudes and habits as opposed to changes in superficial actions."²⁴⁰

Griffith's statement is especially pertinent to the challenges that faced Gamma Zeta in the 1980s and the steps it would have to take in the 1990s and 2000s in order to overcome them. In the last two decades of the twentieth century many policies were put in place by the both ATO's national organization and the University of Illinois, policies that were designed to police some of the areas in which many people – both fraternity alumni and "outsiders" – felt that fraternities had gotten out of hand. In addition to regulations addressing alcohol abuse and hazing, ATO officially outlawed Little Sister programs at its 67th Congress in 1988. The Little Sister programs, which the fraternity had discouraged for years because "...they too often fostered outdated and improper sexual attitudes and frequently interfered with proper chapter operations,"

²³⁹ Minutes of a Chapter Advisory Committee meeting, March 7, 1989, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁴⁰ Bill Griffith to Rod Anderson and Gamma Zeta, April 12, 1989, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

were eliminated as part of a larger “commitment to human dignity” which ATO proclaimed at this Congress, a meeting that Worthy Grand Chief Robert J. Simonds (Gamma Zeta ’43) declared “a watershed.”²⁴¹ By the end of the decade, it was obvious that many aspects of fraternity life were being subjected to change from both above and below. Gamma Zeta had not responded particularly well to these challenges in the 1980s, and it seems that at least some members of the chapter readily realized this fact; in its Annual Report for 1988-1989, Gamma Zeta did not apply for any awards.²⁴² As the ATO Leadership Consultants who reviewed the chapter in the 1980s continually stressed, however, Gamma Zeta possessed great undergraduate potential and strong alumni support, as long as it was never content to “rest on its laurels.” As Bill Griffith indicated in his letter on alcohol policy, the chapter would have to commit itself to *real* and not superficial change if it was to survive and grow strong in this new, more regulated fraternity environment. The 1990s, while not without their rough spots, would see Gamma Zeta get back on track after two difficult decades.

The 1990s: Working Toward True Merit

One of the “rough spots” would come almost immediately in the 1990s, and dealt with a familiar subject: hazing. In the fall of 1990, the chairman of the University’s Board of Fraternity Affairs, David Powell, wrote to Gamma Zeta Worthy Master Doug Ausnehmer and ordered him and the chapter to “immediately cease all member activities” until a hearing about hazing and risk management violations was held.²⁴³ The allegations, brought by a former pledge, included that pledges were made to endure a three-hour “line-up” at the house, during which they were

²⁴¹ Volume 60, No. 1 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Fall 1988, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁴² 1988-1989 Annual Report, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁴³ David Powell to Doug Ausnehmer, October 16, 1990, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

yelled at and made to stand with their knees bent and their elbows out and up.²⁴⁴ Although the hearing that followed brought up serious concerns about whether the incident had ever taken place and ended with the former pledge retracting some of his allegations, the Board of Fraternity Affairs was sufficiently alarmed by the situation to hand down sanctions against ATO. These sanctions included Alcohol Probation until the last day of classes of the Fall 1991 semester, the establishment of a Supervisory Committee to monitor compliance with the sanctions, and requiring the chapter to plan and videotape a hazing education program that would be distributed by ATO to other fraternities on campus. In handing down these sanctions, Board of Fraternity Affairs president Powell wrote that "...the Board wishes to express its most serious concern that undergraduate members of Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega do not recognize the seriousness of their own past actions, specifically regarding the tendency for hazing to become traditional in a fraternity and therefore unrecognizable as hazing."²⁴⁵ Powell's words addressed one of the primary concerns about hazing across the Greek community, namely that it had been going on for such a long time that it had, in some circumstances, become confused with "tradition."

By December of 1990 the chapter had imposed certain sanctions on itself in addition to those handed down by the University, and because of this action it was allowed to resume pledge activities in the spring semester of 1991. The spring edition of *The Gamma Zeta* reported that a new "Membership Education" program had been adopted in the wake of the hazing scandal; the program was only six weeks long and pledges were required to attend six lecture/discussions, keep a notebook about actives in the house, and participate in "shared jobs." The new program had so far been a success because, according to the chapter, "New Members seem to be gaining a

²⁴⁴ Memorandum from John Martinez, Assistant Dean of Students, November 1, 1990, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

²⁴⁵ David Powell to Doug Ausnehmer, December 3, 1990, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

respect and understanding for the rich history of Alpha Tau Omega and actives are also beginning to recognize these achievements.”²⁴⁶ Interestingly, the same edition of the newsletter reported that it was much harder to keep the chapter house looking nice now that the pledges could not be ordered to clean it, implying that the active brothers simply would not do the work. In place of coercion, monetary and other incentives such as the honor “Tau of the Week” were being instituted in order to keep the house in good repair.²⁴⁷

Over the next few years Gamma Zeta chapter did appear to take seriously its approach to new member education, and it dedicated itself to becoming a campus leader in changing the way that new members were educated about and inducted into the fraternity. In the first place, according to an early 1990s “New Member Orientation Booklet,” the term “pledge” was supposed to be dropped from the fraternity’s vocabulary. The new member education program was to include “absolutely no tests” and instead was made up of sessions covering, for example, ATO and chapter history, during which new members were asked to analyze the ATO pledge with an eye toward the contemporary world and to ask questions such as “How does it pertain to discrimination? How does this pertain to diversity?” Another session, called “Basic Expectations,” included the following questions for discussion: “If you were offered the opportunity to cheat on an exam, with no chance of being caught, would you take advantage?” “Define sexual abuse. Define date rape.” “How do alumni feel when they come back to a messy chapter house?” New members were also advised that “Brotherhood is the base of our fraternity, not beer,” and were educated on all the aspects of the ATO Risk Management policy that had gone into effect on August 1, 1989.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Volume 63, No. 2 of *The Gamma Zeta*, Spring 1991, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ New Member Orientation Booklet, c. 1992, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Although strong written programs and good intentions do not necessarily translate into concrete actions, in the case of Gamma Zeta chapter in the 1990s there do seem to have been real changes in the approach to and the execution of new member education. The chapter was recognized several times by the IFC's Greek System Awards for its membership education programs, and this recognition certainly would not have come if hazing incidents or other irregularities were allowed to continue. The University also significantly stepped up its hazing monitoring in the 1990s, requiring all chapters to submit written copies of their official position on hazing and pre-initiation/initiation activities and also scheduling random visits to chapter houses during the pledging "season."²⁴⁹ In this atmosphere of increased vigilance, Gamma Zeta and other fraternity chapters really had no choice but to change at least some of their "traditional" practices.

A much more radical and long-lasting change seems to have occurred in Gamma Zeta from the middle point of the decade on, after two chapter members attended the 1994 ATO National Congress and were introduced to "The Vision," an effort to provide clear objectives and goal-setting for all undergraduate chapters in accordance with the original values envisioned by ATO's founders. In its 1994-1995 Annual Report, Gamma Zeta shared that it had implemented goal-setting in recruitment, critical skills, communications, and career placement in accordance with The Vision after hearing about the program from the Congress delegates. A group of interested members formed a "Vision Committee" and met regularly to set their goals and brainstorm about ways that these goals could be meaningfully and permanently integrated into the daily life of the chapter. In the first committee meeting, members had a discussion about

²⁴⁹ James Dobrovlny to all fraternities, requesting updated copies of their positions on hazing and initiation, November 17, 1993; Matthew Wilcox to James Nuttall, informing Nuttall of the Board of Fraternity Affairs' intention to randomly visit chapter houses in the spring of 1994, December 16, 1993, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48.

what the chapter *stated* that it looked for in terms of new members and what it *actually* prized, and the notes from the meeting are honest and revealing: “1. Grades – but we really don’t reward this; 2. Community Service – we don’t really stress this.” The committee also wondered whether football players actually contributed to the house, or whether they were sought simply as “name recognition.”²⁵⁰ Overall, the new committee stressed that implementing elements of “The Vision” had helped them to take a “recruitment” rather than a “rushing” stance in the quest for new members, and one of the prime goals for this recruitment was to improve the chapter’s scholastic standing, which had slipped in recent years. The program seemed to work, because by the end of 1995 Gamma Zeta had improved to 19th out of 53 fraternities, up from its previous year’s rank of 43rd.²⁵¹ Scholarship continued to be high for the remainder of the 1990s – usually around 3.0 in a 4.0 scale - and in 1999 Gamma Zeta ranked 4th on campus in grades for the Fall semester.²⁵² After 1995, specific chapter scholarship goals, such as “achieve a 3.0 GPA” and “100% graduation,” were clearly stated at the beginning of each school year and were monitored by the chapter officers.

Another area in which chapter officers felt that “The Vision” had made a significant difference was ritual, and they expressed a wish to re-learn the ritual and re-incorporate it into the life of the chapter. ATO Leadership Consultants throughout the 1980s had complained that Gamma Zeta disregarded the ritual and did not conduct certain ceremonies – such as initiations and officer installations – according to the approved guidelines. In the 1994-1995 Annual Report, chapter officers acknowledged this deficiency and asked for national headquarters help in re-learning the ritual and obtaining a full set of ritual equipment, saying “We feel that we should not be punished by not practicing the ritual, but instead, rewarded for our willingness to

²⁵⁰ 1994-1995 Annual Report, Spring 1995, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Summer 1999 *Gamma Zeta News*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

learn it.”²⁵³ There is some evidence, however, that the desire to more fully practice the ATO ritual may have been initially limited to this small and motivated group of officers, because significant changes in this area did not take place within Gamma Zeta until the very end of the decade. In 1999, Leadership Consultant Matt Ferch wrote a rather scathing report on the chapter to Worthy Master Jeff Piper, in which he singled out the informality of its meetings and the lack of accountability for individual actions as evidence that the chapter “thinks it is better than it actually is.” Ferch reminded Piper that “without Ritual, a chapter is reduced to being a social club, instead of a true fraternity,” and he challenged the entire chapter to live up to its past status as a True Merit awardee and especially to “increase the meaning of the Ritual for each brother.”²⁵⁴ It was not until after this letter that Gamma Zeta re-instituted monthly formal chapter meetings and slowly began to change its collective attitude toward the Ritual, a change that the 1998-1999 Annual Report attributed directly to Matt Ferch’s “challenge.”²⁵⁵

Some other developments at Gamma Zeta during the 1990s can be traced to the new sense of purpose, responsibility, and maturity that “The Vision” worked to instill in all ATO members. In 1997, Patrick Jensen ’98 started a Bible study group in the house, whose goal was to “relate the way that religion plays a role in an ATO’s daily decisions.”²⁵⁶ The interest in personal spirituality was linked, for Jensen, to the importance of the collective Ritual, and in this way the Bible study group hearkened back to the original Christian principles that ATO founder Otis Glazebrook had held so dear. The Bible study group never boasted a large membership, but those brothers who did attend found it to be an important part of their experience in the fraternity. In 1996, for the first time on record, all chapter members were required to agree to a “Policy on

²⁵³ 1994-1995 Annual Report, Spring 1995, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵⁴ Matt Ferch to Jeff Piper, c. 1999, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵⁵ 1998-1999 Annual Report, Spring 1999, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵⁶ 1997-1998 Annual Report, Spring 1998, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

Chapter House Destruction” before they could be initiated. This policy instituted a series of fines for infractions involving destruction of the chapter house and the items within it, and after a third offense members would be asked to leave the house, pay for all damages, and possibly face deactivation from the fraternity.²⁵⁷ The destruction policy indicates that Gamma Zeta was interested in promoting a greater sense of personal responsibility among its members and also that it was not willing to tolerate repeated violation of the accepted standards of conduct expected by mature (or at least maturing) adults.

In the Spring of 1997, Gamma Zeta chapter was proud to report to the ATO national headquarters that it had been selected as an “Outstanding Chapter” in the University of Illinois’ Greek System Awards for four years in a row, and that as a result many people “in the community” wondered about the secret of its success. The chapter officers felt that the answer was simple: “The Vision.” Gamma Zeta had – at least to a large extent – accepted and adopted ATO’s “Vision” of what a good fraternity should be, and it had helped the chapter escape from several years of malaise and mediocrity. This commitment to change was reflected and rewarded by not only numerous University of Illinois awards in the 1990s but also by several True Merit Awards from ATO. In 1999, Gamma Zeta won one of ATO’s inaugural Excellence in Scholarship awards for maintaining a grade point average over 3.0, and Patrick Jensen ’98 won the Thomas Arkle Clark Award in 1998, making him the fourth awardee from Gamma Zeta since the award’s inception. Both on a collective and an individual level, Gamma Zeta set high goals and often achieved them in the 1990s.²⁵⁸

The chapter was busy in the 1990s with both old and new activities and ventures. The intramural athletic programs continued to be strong, and Gavin Sontag ’99 (tennis) and Matt

²⁵⁷ 1995-1996 Annual Report, Spring 1996, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁵⁸ Wynn Smiley to Gamma Zeta Chapter, August 20, 1999; Fall 1998 *Gamma Zeta News*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 48-49.

Heldman '98.5 (basketball) were individual standouts. In 1995, new basketball coach Lon Krueger aired his first radio show from the ATO chapter house, starting a tradition that would continue with other varsity coaches in the coming years. Gamma Zeta organized toy drives for the Salvation Army and raised money for lymphoma research through its annual 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament benefitting the Josh Gottheil Memorial Fund, an organization started by the chapter's faculty advisor in memory of his son. In the early 1990s the chapter reported that it had started to recycle aluminum and glass products "due to the increased awareness of our environmental problems," and in 1995 Gamma Zeta created its first home on the World Wide Web, launching www.atoillinois.com.²⁵⁹ In late 1994 the House Corporation announced a massive million dollar fundraising campaign to fund a complete house restoration and provide added scholarship monies for undergraduates. The campaign was named in honor of Stewart D. Daniels and was chaired by his son Stewart Daniels, Jr. '44. A special December 1994 issue of *The Gamma Zeta* included a photograph of the chapter's oldest living alumnus, ninety-five year old Howard H. Cook '17, writing the first check to support the restoration push. The back cover of the special newsletter featured photographs of Gamma Zeta members in military uniform, flanked by the text, "Honoring the past...Gamma Zetas have served...when duty called!"²⁶⁰ Even with new innovations such as a web site, the chapter found that appealing to time-honored traditions and Gamma Zeta heroes of the past was an effective strategy for fundraising and generating alumni support. As the special newsletter went to press, over \$340,000 had already been pledged to the house renovation and scholarship campaign.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ 1991-1992 Annual Report, Spring 1992; Fall 1995 *Gamma Zeta News*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁶⁰ December 1994 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

The house renovation emerged as an area of particular importance at this time because 1995 marked a momentous milestone for Gamma Zeta: its one hundredth anniversary. The occasion was celebrated in grand style on the weekend of September 15, 1995 on the University of Illinois campus, and over five hundred people attended a golf outing, a welcome reception, chapter house tours, a brunch on the chapter house lawn, and an evening gala at the Illini Union, including dinner, dancing, a centennial video presentation, and a toast by Thomas A. Clark '39, the nephew of Dean Clark. During the weekend, portraits of Sidney B. Fithian '95, Stewart D. Daniels '18, and Robert J. Simonds '43 were unveiled in the chapter house, joining the existing portrait of Thomas Arkle Clark to form an impressive gallery of the four ATO Worthy Grand Chiefs who hailed from Gamma Zeta chapter. Gamma Zeta also received its tenth True Merit Award and the ATO Bird Silver Communications Award during the celebrations.²⁶² Occurring as it did in the middle of the 1990s, the Gamma Zeta centennial celebration was a perfect opportunity for the fraternity to both look back in pride and look ahead with anticipation. The new fundraising campaign promised to secure the physical future of the chapter house, and the positive steps taken by the undergraduates through embracing the ATO "Vision" seemed to have safeguarded Gamma Zeta's character and reputation. Despite a rough start, Gamma Zeta closed out the 1990s as a strong and respected ATO chapter.

2000-2003: Into the New Century

Although Gamma Zeta's archival record for the first decade of the twenty-first century covers only four years, it is still possible to get a sense of what life in the fraternity was like during this time period from the reports, newsletters, and articles collected by the chapter. The 1999-2003 Annual Reports provide a good overview of the chapter's activities in those academic

²⁶² December 1995 edition of *The Gamma Zeta*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

years, and reveal many of the same concerns present in the 1990s. Chapter scholarship remained high, as Gamma Zeta ranked in the top ten in all four years and boasted the best average among “large” houses on campus.²⁶³ High scholastic achievement was supported by incentives such as cash bonuses, room selection priority, and steak dinners, and in 2003 the alumni presented the active chapter with a new TV room equipped with a big-screen TV and DVD player as a reward for continued top-ten scholarship.²⁶⁴ Ironically, in the same semester that the new TV room made its debut, Gamma Zeta’s collective grade point average slipped below 3.0 for the first time in recent memory. The 2002-2003 Annual Report addressed this situation and noted that it had “collectively displeased” the brothers, who worked diligently to raise the average in the Spring 2003 semester. They were successful, and the Gamma Zeta alumni were likely impressed that their faith in the chapter’s scholastic achievement, and maturity, had not been misplaced.²⁶⁵

In 1999-2000 all one hundred fifty brothers participated in at least one philanthropy event, and the chapter was recognized for its record-breaking blood drive.²⁶⁶ In 2000-2001 Gamma Zeta won a campus award for raising the most money for philanthropies, and organized an auction to benefit breast cancer research after one member’s mother succumbed to the disease.²⁶⁷ The cancer diagnosis of another brother’s mother in 2003 prompted the chapter to organize a brunch to benefit the American Cancer Society, and the inaugural event raised over \$3,000.²⁶⁸ In order to increase participation in community service events, brothers were encouraged to seek out individual projects in addition to those organized by the chapter. In response to this push, Trent Jackson decided to educate other diabetes sufferers with his own experiences, and Jackson,

²⁶³ Summer 2000 *Gamma Zeta News*, ATO Chapter Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 49.

²⁶⁴ 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000; January 2003 *Gamma Zeta News*, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁶⁵ 2002-2003 Annual Report, Spring 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁶⁶ 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁶⁷ 2000-2001 Annual Report, Spring 2001, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁶⁸ 2002-2003 Annual Report, Spring 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

Brennan Hughes, and David Pavlik volunteered to fight wildfires in California in the fall of 2003.²⁶⁹ Within the chapter, a small group kept the Bible study group founded by Patrick Jensen '98 alive, and the group met on Sunday afternoons to read from the New Testament and the ATO Devotional and invited guest speakers to discuss matters of home, family, school, and faith.²⁷⁰

On the advice of several past Leadership Consultants, Gamma Zeta worked to produce written accounts of successful philanthropic and community service programs so that these events could be easily replicated by future chapter members, and also worked to create “officer notebooks” so that officer positions could be easily passed down from generation to generation.²⁷¹ In 2003, chapter officers attended special leadership workshops in order to perform better in their jobs. There was also a push during these years, again on the advice of the Leadership Consultants, to involve younger members of the fraternity in leadership roles and in the overall decision-making process, to eliminate some of the traditional hierarchies that had previously existed in the chapter. Brothers of all ages and classes came together to support the University’s athletic teams, especially in football and basketball. In 1999-2000 Gamma Zeta boasted over one hundred football and fifty basketball season ticket holders, and also hosted weekly radio shows with both head football coach Ron Turner and head basketball coach Lon Krueger.²⁷² The Illinois club hockey team, which boasted ten ATO members, took third place in the national tournament in 2003.²⁷³ In 2001-2002, Gamma Zeta won intramural championships

²⁶⁹ 2000-2001 Annual Report, Spring 2001; *Daily Illini* November 21, 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁷⁰ 2001-2002 Annual Report, Spring 2002, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13

²⁷¹ 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000; 2001-2002 Annual Report, Spring 2002, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/, Box 13.

²⁷² 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

²⁷³ “Report Your Success Form” filed for the electronic “ATO Road Show,” March 10, 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

in hockey and basketball and placed second in football.²⁷⁴ Sports figured prominently in Gamma Zeta's life in an unusual and unique way when the Chicago Bears spent the 2002-2003 football season in Champaign while Soldier Field underwent renovation. The Monday Night Football matchup between the Bears and the Green Bay Packers provided Gamma Zeta with the opportunity to organize a massive cookout and "mini-Homecoming" at the chapter house prior to the game. The chapter house's excellent location – within walking distance of Memorial Stadium – made it a popular stopping place throughout the special NFL season, which attracted many Gamma Zeta alumni from Chicago and elsewhere.²⁷⁵

Gamma Zeta was obviously still paying close attention to its new member education program in order to avoid any of the hazing incidents that had marred the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, and as part of this process the chapter had officially mandated both the qualities it looked for in new members *and* the expectations for their "training." In the Annual Report for 1999-2000, the "ideal Gamma Zeta recruit" was described as "a leader in high school, able to balance a busy life, a scholar, not too conceited, a moral person, athletic, friendly and outgoing, [who] will have the time to contribute something to the chapter."²⁷⁶ New members were required to record information about the actives in a spiral notebook and were tested on the facts, along with material related to fraternity and chapter history. All new members were required to spend "as much of their free time as possible" at the fraternity house, and as a group they were assigned between two to four jobs per week, which ranged from cleaning the chapter house to working at social events. New members were to address actives by their first names, refrain from using tobacco while performing assigned jobs, not wear earrings, and stay off the

²⁷⁴ 2001-2002 Annual Report, Spring 2002, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

²⁷⁵ 2002-2003 Annual Report, Spring 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

²⁷⁶ 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

furniture in the living rooms, Alumni room, and library.²⁷⁷ Although some of these provisions – in particular, the “jobs” - seem to represent a relaxation of earlier strict guidelines for new member education, the program obviously passed muster with both the University and ATO, because Gamma Zeta had no hazing violations recorded for 2000-2003.

The 1999-2000 Annual Report also chronicled Gamma Zeta’s ongoing quest to revive the use of the Ritual in chapter operations. During the year, for the first time in a very long time, a full initiation ceremony was held in accordance with the Ritual. A new house position, the Ritual Chair, was instituted to help all members understand the importance of the Ritual, and this brother was charged with organizing retreats during which all members learned about and became familiar with the Ritual. In addition to the retreats, the Ritual Chair organized Ritual lectures throughout the year to keep brothers informed and to promote continuous learning. This “Ritual revival” continued throughout the next few years: in 2002 a formal pledging ceremony took place, and all meetings were opened and closed in form. In addition, passages from the ATO Secret Work were read at all meetings, and in 2003 the chapter performed a formal officer transition ceremony. Following these changes to the previously informal chapter attitude toward ATO Ritual, the officers reported that “members have begun to see that ritual brings them closer together in brotherhood.”²⁷⁸

Only one incident seems to have tarnished Gamma Zeta’s reputation in the early 2000s, and it was resolved in such a way that it is possible to see it as essentially positive rather than negative. On December 7, 2001, a Gamma Zeta member ordered a sandwich from Jimmy Johns and then allegedly distracted the delivery driver long enough for another brother (or brothers) to steal several additional sandwiches from the delivery van. Later in the evening, harassing phone

²⁷⁷ Spring 2000 Pledgeship Packet, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

²⁷⁸ 1999-2000 Annual Report, Spring 2000; 2001-2002 Annual Report, Spring 2002; 2002-2003 Annual Report, Spring 2003, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

calls were made from the ATO house to a woman whose phone number was written on one of the stolen sandwiches. She and the Jimmy Johns management both contacted the Urbana Police Department, who filed an initial report about the incident and began to investigate.²⁷⁹ Seven days later, investigating officer Rebecca Kibbons wrote to the University, requesting that disciplinary action be taken against ATO for what she characterized as its failure to cooperate with her department. Although the Worthy Master of the chapter had agreed in a previous conversation to divulge the names of the brothers involved in the incident, he had since refused to provide the information and had become very uncooperative.²⁸⁰ The “Jimmy Johns” incident seemed to languish over the semester break, but in February of 2002 Gamma Zeta’s Worthy Master was ordered to attend an IFC judicial hearing in connection with the actions taken by his fellow chapter members. Although the chapter’s earlier reaction to the incident had been less-than-impressive and had landed it in hot water with not only the University but also the local police department, it was at this juncture that Gamma Zeta members showed some maturity. Prior to the IFC hearing on March 13, 2002, the chapter met and unanimously decided to deactivate the brother responsible for the sandwich theft if he refused to appear at the hearing and take personal responsibility for the incident. The chapter also decided to write letters of apology to Officer Kibbons, the woman who was harassed over the phone, and all Jimmy Johns employees. Following the IFC hearing, the chapter was required to verify that it had deactivated the guilty brother and assigned community service to the brother who had served as an

²⁷⁹ Urbana Police Department Incident Report, December 7, 2001, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

²⁸⁰ Rebecca Kibbons to the University of Illinois, December 14, 2001, ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13.

“accessory” by distracting the driver, that it was continuing internal investigations to uncover other perpetrators, and that it had paid \$50 to Jimmy Johns to replace the stolen sandwiches.²⁸¹

Gamma Zeta chapter impressed both the IFC and its alumni supporters with its eventual pro-active response to the “Jimmy Johns” incident, managing to turn a potentially negative situation into one through which the chapter grew and gained positive momentum. The long history of Gamma Zeta chapter of Alpha Tau Omega at the University of Illinois demonstrates that one of the secrets of the fraternity’s success had been its ability to change, adapt, and grow when necessary. Sometimes it was necessary for alumni, national Leadership Consultants, and others to push the active chapter not to “rest on its laurels” and instead continually strive to improve, but Gamma Zeta’s proud history and many accomplishments usually inspired its active members to make these efforts. Gamma Zeta has weathered the storms of debt, war, apathy, bureaucracy, and a changing social climate to remain a fixture on the University of Illinois campus for more than one hundred years.

²⁸¹ All documents contained in the file folder “Jimmy Johns Incident” in ATO Chapter Holding Files, Record Series 41/95/1, Box 13. Documents are not listed individually to preserve the anonymity of the people involved.