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Ritual Committee

The Torch of Zeta Psi

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How To Build A Museum: Creating The James J. Ljunglin Education Center

1. Introduction

Throughout Zeta Psi's long and storied history, it was deemed essential to document and record that history. Records were kept of each successive chapter's founding and initiates from 1847 onward. Grand Chapter meeting minutes were kept, and published for dissemination to all members beginning in the 1850s. By the 1860s directories of all Zeta Psi members were being published by the Fraternity. Israel C. Pierson, Phi 1865, and Phi Alpha XXXV in 1887-1888, was foremost among Zetes seeking to catalogue and preserve our history. After his time as Phi Alpha, Brother Pierson continued to serve on the Council of Patriarchs, the predecessor to the Executive Committee, and advocated for the role of a fraternity-wide historian to be created. In 1895, the position of Delta Alpha was created, and Brother Pierson was elected to fill that role. It was a position he would remain in for the rest of his life. He passed away in 1908, after having devoted himself wholeheartedly to gathering relics of our earliest days as a fraternity, and creating the massive SemiCentennial Biography of Members in 1897. He made it a point of honor to keep all records entrusted to him in a fireproof safe. He personally corresponded to some of the oldest surviving Zetes of the time, and obtained their written recollections of John Bradt Yates Sommers. He did the same with Sommers' widow, who had remarried and moved to Ithaca, New York. Those letters,

artifacts and photographs formed the nucleus of the Zeta Psi Archives at his offices in New York City.

By the early 1920s, the archives had found a more permanent home at the Zeta Psi Club and central offices in New York City. There they remained, largely unchanged until the sale of the Club in 1959. Subsequent Delta Alphas appear to have been less active than Brother Pierson was in expanding and maintaining the archives. With the advent of paid staff performing record keeping functions, the Delta Alpha role devolved into a mostly ceremonial position, with a few duties to be performed at Grand Chapter meetings.

With the closing of the New York City Club, the Fraternity rented offices for nearly thirty years, at several different locations. At first, the offices remained in Manhattan, although they kept moving further uptown. By the early 1980s, the Fraternity headquarters were in a ground floor office in Bronxville, New York, just north of New York City and adjacent to the Bronx River. Many of the archived materials had ended up stored in boxes on the floor, likely due to the frequent moves. Many old framed photos from the 1800s were set on the floor and leaned against walls.

The danger of not properly maintaining our archives was starkly revealed in the spring of 1984, when a downpour caused the Bronx River to overflow, flooding the Zeta Psi headquarters with more than a foot of water, as related by Brother William J. Ruggles, Theta '77, who was a chapter consultant at the time. Countless individual artifacts, photos and papers were destroyed or damaged, including some of our oldest items.

This disaster spurred the Fraternity to seek out a more suitable and permanent location for its central offices, culminating in the purchase and renovation of the present International Headquarters (IHQ) building in 1987 in Pearl River, New York. After the purchase of this building we once again had a permanent home for our archives and artifacts. However, most were stored in the basement, while some books and convention souvenirs were displayed haphazardly in two glass cabinets in the conference room of IHQ. A few historic items were placed in other parts of the new IHQ building.

2. The State of the Archives (2010)

In August 2010, I was elected Delta Alpha at our New Orleans Convention. As a history major in college, I had developed a lifelong passion for all things historical, and was eager to visit IHQ and see our history for myself. I was therefore surprised to learn that most of our archives had several years earlier been moved to a storage locker in Manalapan, New Jersey, some one hundred miles from IHQ, as there was felt to be insufficient space to store everything in Pearl River. Jon Ernesto, Nu Sigma '04, had a key to the storage locker, so I arranged with him to visit the facility. On November 20, 2011, Jon and I met and entered locker A258. Inside were 52 bankers boxes piled from floor to ceiling, 15 longer boxes, many large flat boxes of photos, and several odd sized boxes, with other large items unboxed. These boxes contained chapter records, bound and unbound volumes of Circle magazines, bundles of publications preceding the Circle, large ledger books, old glassware from Conventions, and many large, old photographs, some damaged by mold.

I was dismayed to find 165 years of our history stacked in crushed boxes, and crammed into a tiny space in a remote place so far from IHQ. Worse yet, our historical record was inaccessible to

our brotherhood, and our full history remained unknown to most, save for the snippets published in our pledge manuals. At that moment, a vision began to form.

3. The Vision (2011)

After visiting IHQ in 2011, I realized that there was much underutilized space there, particularly the conference room. This large room held a conference table and chairs, and had several plaques on the walls. However, it was rarely used for conferences, and was mostly used for storage, with boxes of past convention materials strewn about the room. I could foresee this space being transformed into an area where we could display our historical artifacts all in one place, in an organized fashion, in appropriately designed display cases. We could store the remainder of our archival materials in a storage closet at the back of the room. Our executive director, M. David Hunter, Iota Alpha '80, fully supported this plan, as did our Phi Alpha, M. Lauck Walton, Pi '84. Accordingly, at the August 2011 Board meetings I made a motion that Zeta Psi establish a museum and archives at IHQ, which was approved.

4. Repatriating the Archives (2012)

Over the next several months, I formed a step-by-step plan to implement this project. The first step was to return the archives to IHQ, where we could then sort them out and see what we had. On April 15, 2012, after much telephone and email coordination, Jon Ernesto, Alan van den Arend, Psi '10, and staff members Dane Rude, Phi Epsilon '11, and Sims McGrath III, Phi Lambda '10, met me in Manalapan. We spent the afternoon loading five vehicles with all of the storage locker contents, which completely filled all available space, and drove in a caravan back to Pearl River. Due

to the volume of material, we could not fit it all into the conference room. We determined that the large lighted two car garage space was the best staging area, so all the archive materials were deposited there after the garage was cleaned.

5. Cataloging our Collections (2012 - 2013)

Now that the archives were returned to IHQ, we had a new challenge: sorting through more than seventy boxes of material to cull items that were worthy of display. The boxes had no real organization to them at all, and over the years, items from different eras had been mixed together. Many of the boxes were damaged from being piled together, and they were not of archival quality.

In January 2012, the latest edition of the Circle was published. For that issue, I had written an article about the planned "Museum Project," after the plan's approval by the Board. Brother Doug Hartman, Omicron '88, read my article and contacted IHQ. He informed us that his company designs and fabricates historical exhibits for museums, and catalogs archival collections. He freely offered his professional services to assist us. On the weekend of June 22, 2012, Doug flew from Nebraska to IHQ to personally view our collections and guide us forward. In one day, Doug taught us how to catalog and categorize the numerous different types of items; how to set up a more professional and secure workspace, and how to select items for inclusion in our displays. Doug left us a sample of cataloging work he had done for the Mutual of Omaha insurance company, as a guide for our work. Under his direction, we purchased wire rack shelving, a dehumidifier, and archival storage boxes, as well as many pairs of white cotton gloves for handling the fragile and old documents.

The task of cataloging became the job of Juan Ramos, Nu Sigma '13, who served as our 2012 summer intern for that purpose. Unfortunately, the challenge of reviewing such an immense volume of materials proved to be more than one person could accomplish in a summer. Juan continued to serve as our archives intern throughout the 2012-2013 school year, commuting on weekends from Seton Hall University to IHQ, until cataloging was completed in July 2013.

Once the cataloging was complete, Juan compiled a printed reference list by which to locate materials by topic or type, in neatly organized and numbered boxes on the wire shelves. This would prove to be of vital importance when selecting display items and deciding how to store the remainder of the collections. Yet, we now faced a new challenge: the conference room as it then existed was woefully inadequate to house a museum.

6. Preparing the Site (2013 - 2014)

When Zeta Psi purchased the Pearl River IHQ in 1987, it had most recently been used as office space by a law firm, although it had been built as a single family residence many years earlier. The conference room entrance had at one time been a six foot wide opening, from the front foyer, into which two plain wooden doors had been fitted. There was fluorescent lighting beneath a suspended ceiling and dark wood laminate paneling on the walls. At the far end of the room was a fireplace, with a broken flue and a chimney open to the elements. The room contained three windows on one wall, and a single window with an air conditioner in the opposing wall. There was a large cast iron radiator under the triple window, and two exposed radiator pipes running from floor to ceiling around the windows. The room had very few working electrical outlets, and no insulation in the walls.

Our professional advisor, Doug Hartman, informed us that we must have a room that was climate controlled, and ideally leak-proof, with no fluorescent lighting and no exposure to direct sunlight. To turn this room into a secure museum space would require a complete demolition and rebuilding of the room. We were fortunate to have Sims on staff to handle that job. Sims both acted as general contractor, subbing out HVAC and electrical work, and as the main builder, in addition to his regular workload on staff. On June 24, 2013, I shared an action plan with Sims, Dave, and Director of Chapter Operations, Tyler Boisvert, Nu Sigma '10. By August of that year, Sims had the large radiator removed, and had obtained bids from contractors to do the remainder of the work. He also researched local building codes to determine how many windows we could remove or cover, and other compliance issues. After being informed that we had a \$10,000 budget for the renovation project, and comparing that to bids received, Sims determined to do even more work himself. He removed the light fixtures, suspended ceiling and wall paneling, only to discover that the original walls were made of cracked plaster and lathe and were not insulated. In April 2014, I joined him at IHQ to complete demolition of the walls, using sledgehammers and prybars.

Once demolition was complete, Sims insulated the walls and installed new drywall, covering the single window and the fireplace opening (that had been sealed from above). He covered the old cracked ceiling with new drywall, and painted the ceiling and walls. He replaced all the old window trim with new stained wood, after installing new windows. He obtained and installed a set of French doors for the entryway to the room. He hired a contractor to install a climate control system and an electrician to rewire the entire room, so we could install track lighting fixtures. By the end of 2014, the room was almost complete. However, in early 2015, Sims announced his departure from staff, and shortly thereafter moved to Boston.

7. Research: How to Make the Vision a Reality (2014 - 2015)

Now that the room was ready to house a museum, I had to re-measure everything and determine the design and configuration of the display cases. My original idea for what the displays might look like came from a small golf museum I had seen in the spring of 2013 at Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, New York. That museum was set out along the walls of a wide hallway in their clubhouse. It consisted of lighted wood and glass display cabinets, with a time line running across the back of the cabinets, corresponding to various artifacts, photos, and documents that were mounted above it. There were also waist high horizontal glass display cases through which one could view various ancient golf artifacts, with storage cabinets underneath. This seemed to be an ideal model for our purposes, and became my primary inspiration for our displays.

At that time, it was my intention to mount the exhibits myself. To gain insight, I visited more than a dozen small museums during the course of the project. These included the Grand Canyon Museum (Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona), the National Geographic Museum (Washington D.C.), Barnegat Light Museum (Long Beach Island, New Jersey), Everson Museum of Art (Syracuse, New York), Witter Agricultural Museum (Syracuse, New York), the New York State Fair History Exhibit, the Empire State Theatre and Musical Instrument Museum (New York), a historic mansion in Newburgh, New York, the Onondaga County Salt Museum (New York), The Onondaga County Historical Association Museum (New York), Jamestown National Historical Park (Virginia), and others. I also viewed museum exhibits online, such as the Johnny Carson Museum, created by Doug Hartman, and the Beta Theta Pi Museum, located at their headquarters in Oxford, Ohio. In each case I focused my research on what mounting materials were used, and how the

exhibits were put together, rather than the content of each museum. I also researched online sources to obtain mounting and display materials, and techniques to create the explanatory placards that would adjoin each exhibit item. I spent much time visiting local craft stores to gather materials I thought might be suitable for our purposes. Finally, I utilized the Gaylord Bros Inc. catalog and online store to obtain archival display and preservation materials.

Over the course of the project, the idea of what the finished museum would look like changed significantly. My original plan called for the back three to four feet of the room to be walled off, and made into a storage closet for the undisplayed archives, which were primarily boxes of chapter specific files and other paper documents. After I realized the storage potential from seeing the Oak Hill display cabinets, I decided to use the whole room space for the museum, and fill the cabinets below the displays with the remaining archival material. The size and placement of the display cases also evolved over time, as I gained further insights into the best use of the space available through repeated visits to IHQ, and discussions with Doug Hartman and others.

8. Building the Infrastructure (2015 - Winter)

My early research in the Gaylord catalog made me aware of how expensive a single museum quality display case is to purchase. I had envisioned six such cabinets in our museum, with four lining the long and now windowless wall, with two on the facing wall, aside the windows. In early 2015 I had located a cabinet maker in the Syracuse area who could custom build cabinets for me to bring to IHQ. By this point, we had used up the previously allotted \$10,000 budget renovating the space, and more funds were not readily available from IHQ to complete the next stage of this project. I therefor determined to finance construction of the cabinets myself. This provided greater

flexibility in retaining my own cabinet maker, who could construct the cabinets to my exact specifications. It also meant that I would have to bring the cabinet to IHQ.

By March of 2015 the first four cherry wood and glass cabinets were complete. Now I had to transport them approximately 250 miles from Syracuse to Pearl River. On March 13, 2015, I rented a truck, loaded the cabinets, and drove to IHQ, where Bill Ruggles, Johnny Surufka, Alpha Epsilon '13, and Greg McElroy, Phi '70, helped me unload them. I spent the rest of the weekend trying to install and secure the cabinets in a level row against a wall, while shimming them all to balance out a sagging floor. After much trial and error, and with the generous assistance of Bill Ruggles, we got the cabinets installed and leveled.

9. The Return of Doug (2015 - Spring)

Around this time, I realized I was not confident in mounting all the exhibits and constructing the Zeta Psi historical timeline myself. I invited Doug Hartman to revisit IHQ, which he did in May 2015. I was only seeking some guidance and instruction, but Doug saw a bigger picture. Rather than build the timeline inside the cabinets along the sixteen foot wall, he suggested moving the cabinets across the room, and using most of that wall for an enlarged timeline/photographic display. The lowest three feet of the wall would be reserved for additional glass topped display cabinets. We thereupon removed the four original cabinets, repositioned them on the other two walls, re-shimmed and leveled them, which proved to be a very time consuming task. I also had three more cabinets made and brought them to IHQ on July 17, 2015.

I had planned to place a large set of flat drawers in the center of the room, mounted on a storage cabinet, where the hundreds of large photographs could be housed. Doug advised us that would impede the flow of the room, and suggested we place those cabinets against the windows, which had by this time been covered with an ultraviolet-blocking shade. Doug also suggested utilizing the adjoining foyer as a part of the museum, which would require repainting, new lighting, and another set of French doors. Doug then announced he would draft a “conceptual design” for the whole museum at no cost to Zeta Psi. He further informed us he would personally construct the exhibits in Omaha, and drive them out to IHQ to install them. He almost immediately began work on a design and layout for the exhibits, and sent that to IHQ in June. He felt he could complete the project within the limits of the \$25,000 gift that had recently been made to the museum. Lastly, Doug recognized that “museum” did not fully encompass what we hoped to create, and suggested we call it the Education Center. After waiting some months for Doug to schedule a return visit to IHQ, he informed us that he would not be able to complete the project, and recommended we hire someone in the local area to create the exhibits, based on his conceptual designs.

10. Creating Displays: Enter Ira (2015 - Summer)

In 2014, as much progress was being made, I had projected completion of the Education Center by June 1, 2015, in time for NYC Founders Day weekend. Without Doug, that was no longer a realistic goal. I began a search for Doug’s replacement. Specifically, I needed someone nearer to Pearl River, with graphic arts skills, who could photograph historical documents and pictures, enlarge them and professionally mount them onto our timeline wall. I had some acquaintance with Ira Berkowitz, Gamma ‘82, who was living close to IHQ in New Jersey, and knew he owned a graphic design and printing company. On October 24, 2015, I met with Ira at IHQ to determine if

he could assist us. Ira enthusiastically embraced the project, and immediately set to work designing a timeline wall. I provided many drafts of the timeline data of important events in Zeta Psi history, and developed the explanatory descriptions of each item, while Ira culled through our archives collections seeking documents and photos to tell our story. He took high resolution photographs during his many visits to IHQ, and by the spring of 2016 had turned those into the timeline wall display that you see today.

11. Sorting and Selecting Artifacts (2015 - Autumn)

While Ira was doing his work, Bill Ruggles and I spent many weekends at IHQ throughout the remainder of 2015 and the first half of 2016, sorting through boxes and selecting artifacts that were worthy of display. We sought to include those items that were most unique, and that helped to tell the story of Zeta Psi, from our earliest days into the twenty first century. I had now determined that we needed two sets of flat drawers, due to the volume of photographic material we had. The flat drawers were ordered and shipped directly to IHQ.

Now that the four original seventy six inch high cabinets were not being used for the timeline display, I also had to determine what exhibits might be best suited to be displayed in them. Given the wealth of materials we had on certain topics, I decided to give each case a theme, and build a display around that theme. The first cabinet would highlight Zeta Psi publications, from our earliest directories and newsletters in the 1800s to the most recent issue of the Circle. The center cabinet at the back of the room would feature the Zeta Psi Educational Foundation, from its founding in 1944, to the development of the Leadership Training Institute in the 1980s, to today's Membership Education programs. The third cabinet would contain relics from Zeta Psi

Conventions all over North America, from a small cloth banner proclaiming the banquet menu at the 1894 Ithaca Convention, to souvenirs from our most recent Convention. The last cabinet was reserved for memorabilia from the numerous Zeta Psi clubs and Elder Associations over the years. These items ranged from photos and dinner programs from the New York City club of a hundred years ago, to the latest programs from the New York Regional Alumni Club's annual Founders Day banquet.

Bill Ruggles was instrumental in selecting artifacts from the many boxes of catalogued items stored in the garage, and devoted many weeknights and weekends to the task. I appointed Bill Assistant Delta Alpha due to his great interest in and assistance on this historical project. Bill was also happy to assist with all the physical work of transforming the space into the Education Center. This included carpentry, installing doors, painting, staining and scraping windows, along with numerous trips to Home Depot and Staples for supplies. Bill even recruited his son and nephew to move a 500 pound cornerstone from the original Phi chapter house out of IHQ's backyard and into the foyer to be incorporated as an exhibit. This project would not have been completed in a timely manner without his assistance.

12. Completion: The Final Push (2016)

In 2015, I made nine trips to IHQ. By early 2016, I was making the 500 mile round trip from my home to IHQ approximately every three weeks in an effort to complete the Education Center before the June 11, 2016 NYC Founders Day. Between February 12th and June 12th, I made eight such trips. There was an extraordinary amount of small detail work that seemed to require more time than I could possibly give it. At home, I went through draft after draft of the timeline content

with Ira, trying to achieve just the right amount of wording to explain the gist of the photo or document in the context of the overall timeline. On weekends I drove to Pearl River with my toolbox, as well as my white cotton gloves, to be prepared to work on whatever items were left undone.

On several occasions, I brought help with me from upstate New York. Scott Pedersen, Psi '90, a professional electrician, accompanied me on one visit to complete the last of the lighting that had been left undone due to several reconfigurations of the display cases. Tom Jewett, Psi '61, also came down to Pearl River with me, and helped sort the many old composites and other photographs into the flat metal drawers. He also stained all the baseboards prior to installation. Once all of the display cases had been set into their final positions, shimmed and leveled, I installed baseboard trim around the perimeter of the room, in an effort to hide the uneven floor and make the room look more complete.

In addition to carpentry work, I had to mount all the exhibits in their respective cases, and create small explanatory placards for each item or series of items. This was accomplished by trial and error, utilizing supplies I obtained from my local Staples store, and with the assistance of my law firm paralegal, April Patnode. Once each placard's wording was typed onto clear plastic film and affixed onto mounting board, it had to be cut to size with a razor knife, and taped into place with double sided tape. This proved to be a very time consuming process, but enabled us to construct a professional caliber exhibit. Finally, on the afternoon of June 11, 2016, the EdCenter was completed.

13. Dedication - The James J. Ljunglin Education Center

On June 12, 2016, at 2pm, the Grand Opening of the James J. Ljunglin Education Center took place at IHQ. Brother Jim Ljunglin, Pi '57, had most generously donated \$25,000 to fund the creation of the "EdCenter" as part of his contributions to the most recent Capital Campaign. In light of such a benevolent gift, the EdCenter was named in his honor. Brother Ljunglin attended the dedication and gave a heartfelt speech regarding the need to preserve our history, and to learn from it. More than fifty brothers and guests joined him in the former conference room and foyer as he delivered his remarks on a warm Sunday afternoon. Others present included past Phi Alpha and Executive Director Dave Hunter, whose support was instrumental in making the EdCenter a reality; Greg McElroy, who embodies the "living history" of Zeta Psi; Phi Alpha Barth Gillan, Alpha Psi '85, and numerous officers and board members of the Fraternity and Foundation. In conjunction with the dedication, a luncheon reception was held under a tent in the parking lot of IHQ for the enjoyment of all.

14. Conclusion

Bringing the Ljunglin Education Center to life at the Grand Opening of June 12, 2016, was undoubtedly the proudest moment of my many years as a Zete. It is my hope that having a permanent education center and archives exhibit at our IHQ building will encourage Brothers from every chapter to visit IHQ, and get a sense of the significance of our history. However, I recognize that Brothers are spread out all over the globe and that a visit to Pearl River may be difficult, if not impossible for many. It is therefore my hope to have the contents of our EdCenter and archives digitalized, and made available for all Brothers to access on our website.

It is also my hope that we may continue to expand the archives through making strategic purchases of Zeta Psi artifacts that are often listed for sale on internet auction sites. We have already established a budget item for this purpose. Lastly, I have encouraged all Brothers to add a provision to their Last Will and Testament, bequeathing their Zeta Psi badge and any other unique Zeta memorabilia back to the Fraternity upon their passing. To facilitate this, I have created two new “badge boards” to supplement the existing “badge board” that is mounted on the wall at the EdCenter, whereby each Brother’s individual legacy may be preserved and displayed for the benefit of all Brothers.

Now that our history has been preserved and displayed in a climate-controlled room, with fire and security alarms, it is my sincere hope that future Delta Alphas will continue to maintain and expand the EdCenter. I also hope that all Brothers will be able to use the EdCenter as a resource for learning about the rich history and heritage of our great fraternity, Zeta Psi.

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