

Distinguished Service Awards



Barth Gillan received the Distinguished Service Award and was introduced by Corey Nicholson

Read Barth Gillan's Acceptance Speech Below

Thank you, Corey, for that kind introduction. It is truly an honour to be introduced by someone who is one of the great Canadian Zetes.

And happy birthday to Zeta Psi. In our 175th year it feels quite appropriate that we are recognizing both an American and a Canadian for the Distinguished Service Award – it is a great testament to the influence that Zeta Psi has had in Canada, and the influence that Canadians have had on Zeta Psi.

40 years ago, my life changed because two important things:

- In January, 1982, I was initiated into the Alpha Psi Chapter at McGill University. Corey Nicholson and Jeff Ball (both DSA recipients) were there. This was the beginning of my Zete “experience.”
- In August, 1982, I attended my first Zete convention – in Chicago. Many of the DSA recipients that Greg McElroy mentioned being in attendance tonight were also there. This is what I consider to be the beginning of my Zete “journey.”

As to my Zete “experience” and my Zete “journey,” these sound similar. Aren't they the same thing? In my opinion, they are different. Here is why: the difference akin being a passenger in a car versus driving the car.

In other words, your Zete experience is what happens to you: initiation, graduation, saying “I was a Zete in college” and having your groomsmen at your wedding be Zetes. These are important events and they happen to all of us, but they are just events.

Your Zete journey is what YOU make of it: being an officer in the chapter, road tripping to another chapter, going to a Zete convention, becoming a leader in the elder chapter after you graduate, going to another convention and getting involved at the international level.

On my journey, I have met many great and interesting men and I have made a whole lot of friends in the process. Isn't that what being in a fraternity is supposed to be all about? We are all brothers, we are all equals and we can network and interact with people who we might otherwise never meet.

At the Convention that year, I had an opportunity to meet James H. McLaughlin (another DSA recipient). Jim founded the Zeta Psi Foundation of Canada. Unfortunately, Jim passed away later in 1982, but as an undergrad I got to meet him and I consider that part of my journey. Since, then I have attended lots and lots of conventions and I have met an admiral, priests, sandwich tycoons, a financial guru, an

Olympic athlete and as of today, a professional comic. The list goes on and I do them all a disservice by not referring to each of them individually.

At a convention you have the opportunity to meet people you would not otherwise. Take advantage of that opportunity because any Zete here will take the time to talk to you if you make an effort. At a convention, we are not measured by our titles – we are all brothers. And, as I learned in 1982, this might be your only chance to talk to one of them. Some of the great men you meet at a convention have been DSA recipients, but the majority of them are not– yet all of them – and all of you – have had an influence on me.

I am the fourth brother from the Alpha Psi chapter to have served as Phi Alpha, but the DSA was introduced more recently. So I am the first brother from Alpha Psi to receive this distinction and I am pleased to have a number of my chapter brothers here tonight. Hopefully, one of them and some of you will continue your Zete journey down this path.

My journey began as a brother, but has continued for much of my adult life as a family man. I brought my wife Diane, who is here today, to her first convention in 1992 in Seattle. During the boat cruise we were looking for a place to sit down and eat. So we approached a table with some vacant seats. As we approached, the young men at the table saw Diane coming and all stood up. If there is anyone from the Omicron Chapter here tonight – you made her first experience such a positive one that she continues to come to conventions, and more importantly, she allows me to continue to come to conventions. My two daughters, Chelsea and Daisy, have grown up coming to conventions and have probably been to more than most Zetes. Zeta Psi is part of my family, and my family is part of Zeta Psi.

You might think that 1982 was the pivotal year since both my Zete journey and my Zete experience began then. However, I would like to recount a memory from 1984, when I was the Chapter Phi and Pope John Francis II visited Montreal on a cross-Canadian tour. The Chapter got up early the morning of his visit, and in true Zeta Psi “last minute fashion” began to make a sign to welcome the pope. We connected a series of Molson party posters together, and on the blank side we wrote In Domino Confido – “I Trust in the Lord.” This phrase appears in the McGill crest because it was the personal motto of James McGill, the founder of McGill University, so we thought it was an appropriately symbolic way to greet the Pope.

As the Pope was coming up the street in the Popemobile he noticed the Polish flag flying outside the Polish Institute, which was three doors down from the Zete House, so he waved to all of the people cheering him in Polish. As he continued up the street looking in our direction we waived our sign which made him smile, and we boisterously toasted him with Bloody Caesars (because drinking a Bloody Mary seemed too sacrilegious). He waved and blessed the Zete house as he continued up the street. Little did we realize, but the Newman Center, or Catholic Students Association, which was across the street, had made a beautiful tapestry to commemorate the Pope’s visit, but the Pope didn’t see it as he was reading our sign made out of Molson posters. We trusted in the Lord.

You can judge a man by the company that he keeps. I hope to be judged by the Zetes who have made my experience into a journey. If this is your first Zete convention, get your passport stamped and let this be the first step in your Zete journey. If this is not your first convention, don’t let your journey end now.

Thank you for this recognition. I am truly humbled to be associated with these great and august men.

Greg McElroy presented the Distinguished Service Award to Andy Nunez



To see the ceremony and Andy's speech, scan the attached QR code.

