

CENTENNIAL HORIZON

Volume 1, Number 2

Spring 2006



CORNELL ACACIA CENTENNIAL SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 27-29, 2007

Acacia Centennial Logo designed by Igor Dolgalev #1068 (full color image available on Cornell Acacia Centennial Blog)

Cornell Acacia Centennial Plans Announced **David Klesh #1037**

If you want to reconnect with old friends, contribute to a lasting legacy, and celebrate an outstanding record of achievement, there is a great way to do all of these things and more. Plan on attending Cornell Acacia's Centennial Celebration next April.

Cornell Acacia turns 100 on May 30, 2007 and we have a lot to celebrate. The chapter has been through eighteen Presidential administrations, two World Wars, one Great Depression, and numerous cultural changes. Through it all, the chapter has maintained its commitment to excellence and human service.

Today, the Cornell chapter is as strong as it has ever been. The active members have built a strong reputation on campus, and will be initiating a pledge class of record size. The alumni are hard at work to maintain the ties of friendship across the distance of years. When we consider all that Cornell Acacia has meant to its members and to the Cornell community, it seems fitting that we hold a memorable celebration.

We are asking you to mark your calendars for the last weekend in April of 2007. If you have not been back to Cornell recently, this is a great chance to see all the recent positive changes to both the chapter house and the campus. Here is a tentative schedule of events:

Friday, April 27

PM: Wine and cheese welcome at the house: Learn more about our chapter's proud history and strong current status. Tom Balcerski (#1063) will present information on the history of the chapter and will officially unveil *Acacia Fraternity at Cornell: the First Century*.

Saturday, April 28

AM: Campus tours and cultural events: This will be a great chance for your family to see the beauty of the Cornell campus. As the centennial draws closer, we will decide on events to enjoy during the day.

PM: Corporation Annual Meeting: Discussion about the future of the Cornell chapter. We will ask all attendees to contribute their ideas that will ensure another 100 years for the Cornell chapter.

Centennial Banquet: If you can only make it to one event during the weekend, this is it! The banquet will be held at the Memorial Room in Willard Straight Hall. We will be inviting members of the Cornell administration, as well as brothers from Acacia's International Council and International Headquarters. There will be musical entertainment and a presentation of alumni awards. This is a great chance to celebrate the pride of being a Cornell Acacian.

Sunday, April 29

AM: Farewell brunch at the house

In the next issue of *Centennial Horizon*, we will have more specifics about the event, including information on hotel rooms.

Several brothers will be serving as CACOs to encourage participation among their classmates. "CACO" stands for "Cornell Acacia Class Officer". The concept of the Class Officer is part of a larger effort to build the alumni network. By appointing a representative who can serve as a regular contact, it is hoped that Acacia can involve its alumni in a more efficient and effective manner. You may soon receive a call or e-mail from a CACO.

If there is anything I can do to encourage your attendance, please let me know. I know it is sometimes difficult to make it back to Ithaca, but I hope that by announcing the event so far in advance, we can maximize participation and attendance. Please let me know now if you are tentatively planning on attending, as we will need to begin reserving hotel rooms and catering. I can be contacted by e-mail at davidklesh@hotmail.com, by phone at 646-643-6774 or by mail at 3250 35th Street, Astoria, NY 11106. I look forward to hearing from you.

An Historic Journey through Acacia History Tom Balcerski #1063

Since the last issue of the *Centennial Horizon*, I have been quite busy researching and writing. I would like to use the space of this article to share with you some of my findings and give you the general direction my research will take in the future. I also want to share some of the memorable photographs I have encountered as part of Acacia's history.

Taking vacation time off work, I headed up to Ithaca on the evening of Wednesday, February 8. My plan was to spend Thursday, Friday, and part of Saturday researching at various locations on the Cornell campus and in the town of Ithaca.

Thursday morning I awoke around 8 am to head over to Carl A. Kroch Rare and Manuscript Collections Library, located in the basement of Olin Library. I was out the door by 8:45 am, and to my surprise, the campus was empty. I had forgotten how hard it was to get up for a 9:00 am, to say nothing about the 8:00 am classes of days gone by.

Arriving at Kroch Library, I was taken aback by the sight of Professor Glenn Altschuler, American Studies, pacing the floor of a nearby showcase room. When the appointed hour of nine o'clock came, a member of the library staff opened the door to let both of us inside. Having made an appointment to meet one of the reference librarians, I paused to introduce myself to the woman at the door. Professor Altschuler huffing his way to the door with jacket in hand said deadpan, "Enough chit-chat, time's wasting," and stormed off to the rare reading room. Both the librarian and I looked at each other before enjoying a mutual chuckle.

Though I may have laughed at Professor Altschuler's comment, I envied and soon came to mimic his frantic style of research. With limited time in the rare reading room, I poured over the Acacia Fraternity Corporation minutes book, with minutes from 1909-1972 (*figure 1*). I am told by the librarian staff that the book was the gift of Ernie Schauler (#500) (Ernie does not recall donating the minutes book.)



Figure 1: The Corporation Minutes Book.

Reading about the corporation's woes from inception to the early 1970s was enlightening, if a tad boring at times. I was able to take digital photographs of the collection, and I now have the ability to access the materials outside of Kroch Library. With little time to spare, I rummaged through



Figure 2: 105 Dewitt Place

the collections of various brothers who were Acacians, including those of Harry Clifford Reed (#38) and Everett Strong (#275), both notable Cornellians and Acacians. I also began research of the Williams Family papers, specifically of Henry Shaler Williams, the builder of Northcote at 318 Highland Road.

After a respite for lunch, I met up with Brad Ayres (#1070) downtown at the History Center. The History Center is museum of sorts, dedicated to cataloging the history of Ithaca and Tompkins County. They also have a volunteer research staff and a number of scrapbooks, phonebooks, and aerial photographs of the Ithaca region. Thanks to the help of the staff there, I accomplished a few frantic but fruitful hours of research. Meanwhile, Brad headed over to the County Clerk's office to research the deeds of the various houses in which Acacia lived. Did you know the fraternity has lived in four separate houses? They are, in order, 105 DeWitt Place, 1908-1909 (*figure 2*), 708 East Seneca Street, 1909-1919 (*figure 3*), 614 East Buffalo Street, 1919-1934 (*figure 4*), and 318 Highland Road, 1934-present (*figures 5*).

Precisely at nine, I walked over to Kroch to research the Williams papers. Once again I saw Professor Altschuler who commented, "Enough daylight has been wasted," before proceeding to work. This time, I think I equaled the master in terms of my pace, as I plowed through a few folders in under an hour.

Later, I met Dave Rimshnick (#1062) at Historic Ithaca downtown. Formerly the DeWitt Historical Society, Historic Ithaca is a preservation society dedicated to the continued and future preservation of historic landmarks in Ithaca and Tompkins County.

After this visit, I made my way to the DeWitt Mall to see William Downing, chief architect of the firm William Downing and Associates. Bill owns the DeWitt Mall, and his firm occupies the top floor of the building. It was 1961 that Sherwood Holt designed the final version of what became the Wing and the expansion of Acacia Fraternity at Cornell. According to Bill, who was a new associate at the time, a brother of Acacia by the name of Bob Ayers sketched the original plans



Figure 3: 708 E. Seneca St.



Figure 4: 614 E. Buffalo St.

drawn for the chapter in 1958, plans that were later rejected in favor of the final design.

Bill Downing led me into his vault, located on the third floor of the DeWitt Mall. He let me loose there, and I spent time digging around the archives searching for Acacia materials. With a stack of papers in hand, I left just in time make lunch on the hill.

The next morning, I spent some time studying old *Cornellians* and *Class Books* for evidence of Acacia. I discovered other fraternities occupied the E. Buffalo Street house before our occupation, but we were the first fraternity to occupy the E. Seneca Street house.

I have also kept up with the oral history, and I am proud to say that, along with the help of Zach Weinstein (#1067), Ilya Cherepakhin (#1058), Paul Molnar (#1014), and Brad Ayres, we been in contact with almost one hundred brothers to date. A mass e-mail was



Figure 5: Northcote at 318 Highland Rd.

sent out to the entire Acacia directory, and I try to update the Cornell Acacia Centennial web log (located on the web at <http://cornellacacia.blogspot.com> – I can also mail interested brothers a paper copy of the web log).

We are self-publishing this edition, and are currently working to find a printer to see our history realize its proper form. At present, our budget allows for a paperback, 8.25" by 10.75" edition with a perfect binding and color cover. We are interested, however, in producing hard cover editions, but we will need your help to make it happen (see page 4 of this newsletter)!

I hope to continue to hear from you, my fellow alumni brothers! It's been a pleasure talking to you so far, and I hope to speak to more of you still. And, I hope very earnestly to meet many of you at the Cornell Acacia Centennial over the April 27 – 29, 2007 reunion. At that time, the book will be unveiled and a special presentation will be made about the chapter's history. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. Time to get writing!

Acacia History Project Wish List

As published on the Cornell Acacia Centennial weblog early, I am hoping you can help me with these items:

1. **Travelers**, 1951 - 1971. With the exceptions of spring and fall 1958 and fall 1965, we are in need of Travelers from 1951 to 1970. We also need fall 1974, spring and fall 1976, spring and fall 1978, spring 1980, and spring and fall 1981.
2. **Photographs** from 1907 to 1947 and from 1968 to 1995 of brothers, Acacia, and Cornell. If you have a scanner, why not send some of your photos from Acacia to me via email (tjb36@cornell.edu). If you don't have a scanner, send them to Acacia via mail, and they will be returned to you in a week's time.
3. **Survey** questions. Though the research team and I plan to contact every alumni with a known, working telephone number, the more alumni who volunteer answers to the survey questions mailed in the Fall 2005 *Traveler*, the easier our jobs will be.
4. **Donations**. At the time of this publication, we have received \$1100+ in alumni dues earmarked for the history project. See the back page of this *Horizon* for the complete list.

CENTENNIAL HONOR ROLL

David Fischell #800
Paul Molnar #1014
Jay Ayres #1052

Thomas Balcerski #1063
Robert Merritt #807
William Wickham #450

John Abrehamson #1039
Thomas Kocovsky #730
Howard Zwiefel, III #734

Centennial Scholar (\$100-\$249)

Andrew Hur #1053
Mike Nasatka #1045

David Klesh #1037
Thomas Ricketts #1051

Supporting Scholar (\$50-\$99)

Michael Cvijanovich #981
Timothy Thom #887

Charles Huffine #931
Zachary Weinstein #1067

Contributing Scholar (\$5-\$49)

Stuart Hantman #756
Andy Regenbaum #973

Charles Kalter #1066
Brian Sivillo #993

Horizon Editor

Paul Molnar #1014

To date, we have raised **\$1130** of our **\$3000 goal**. In addition to the donor levels listed above, we will acknowledge total donations of \$250-\$499 in the Chapter Historian's Club and donations of \$500 and over in the Chapter Founders' Club. All donations are cumulative over time.

All donations over \$100 will receive a free copy of *Acacia Fraternity at Cornell: the First Century*, and will be recognized in the appendix. All donations over \$250 will receive two free copies of the book and recognition in the appendix. Any donation over \$500 will receive two free copies, recognition in the appendix, and a special recognition in the preface by the author.

Alums Discuss Centennial & History Project

Jay Ayres #1052

On January 7th, brother Tom Balcerski (#1063) was kind enough to open his home in Ramsey, NJ to host a planning meeting for the upcoming Centennial celebration and related history book project. Over 10 active and recent alumni were in attendance, including Tom, myself, Brad Ayres (#1070), Ilya Cherepakhin (#1058), Randy Clark (#1047), Igor Dolgalev (#1068), Byron Hing (#1040), Charles Kalter (#1066), David Klesh (#1037), Paul Molnar (#1014), Mike Nasatka (#1045), Dan Scharfman (#1078), and Zach Weinstein (#1067). Also calling in was John Carpenter, III (#959)

Tom, Brad, Paul, and Zach are leading the efforts to write the history book, which will be a 200 page, hard-bound volume containing narrative, pictures, and anecdotes from Cornell Acacia's first 100 years. The book will be completed by spring 2007, in time for the Centennial celebration. At the meeting, we discussed issues related to the book's financing, promotion, and production. Tentatively, plans are to offer the book for sale in the price range of \$40-\$50 dollars, or as a giveaway for alumni who make a significant donation (\$100 or more) to the project. To promote the book, we are conducting a phone-a-thon to get alumni excited about the project.

The book's author has collected an impressive

amount of content from Acacia's history. Many alumni from different eras have been interviewed, pictures and historical documents have been found in Northcote's chapter room, and additional research has been conducted. Brad spent time in the archives at the University of Michigan researching Acacia's first chapter, and Tom was able to access documents located in Cornell's Kroch Rare and Manuscripts Library. An online blog of interesting historical facts is now being maintained at <http://cornellacacia.blogspot.com>. If you are an alumnus and would like to share your piece of Acacia's history, please contact Tom Balcerski at tjb36@cornell.edu or Zach Weinstein at zaw2@cornell.edu.

Also on the meeting agenda was the planning for the upcoming Centennial celebration. Detailed planning for the event is still in its initial stages, but keep an eye out in the *Traveler* and let Tom know if you have any suggestions.

Finally, the meeting attendees were happy to just hang out, watch the NFL playoffs, and have pizza together. We're all grateful that Tom was able to host this event.

The next Centennial planning meeting will be held on Saturday, June 10th, 2006, time and place to be determined. Please contact David Klesh (davidklesh@hotmail.com) for details if you would be interested in attending.