

# The Grip Newsletter

G A M M A D E L T A P S I F R A T E R N I T Y I N T E R N A T I O N A L

www.gammadeltapsi.com

## A Good Year

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)  
Chairman – Board of Trustees

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*A Good Year.* Borrowing the innocuous sounding title from a novel by one of my favorite contemporary authors, Peter Mayle, as the lead article for the final 2008 edition of *The Grip*, seems most appropriate.

Those familiar with the literary works of Mr. Mayle already know he writes quite proficiently about life in France as seen through a foreigner's perspective (most often an Englishman), witness *Hotel Pastis*, *Chasing Cezanne*, *A Year in Provence*, *Anything Considered*.

In 2006, *A Good Year* was made into a film by famed director Ridley Scott and starred Russell Crowe and the stunning French actress, Marion Cotillard. While Crowe's character, Max Skinner, is a successful investment banker living a prosperous existence in London, he learns of the passing of a favorite uncle played by Albert Finnie, and returns to Provence in the south of France to claim the Chateau and Vineyard (now in a state of decay and neglect) bequeathed to him by late Uncle Henry (Finnie).

The story's setting and premise, although largely different from the current plight of Gamma, has striking similarities once you remove the beauty of the French countryside, the improbable circumstances Max finds himself engaged in – courting the affections of an impossibly gorgeous French waitress, and matching wits with the uneven temperament of the native groundskeeper cum master vintner Amis (Richard Coyle).

In the end, through requisite trial and tribulation, and recollection of a not forgotten past – *I will not ruin the ending if you have not read the book or seen the movie* – Max finds himself a changed man, not because of the rewards he eagerly anticipated, but through the wonderment of journey and self-discovery in realizing something so magnificent after the most inauspicious beginnings, to ultimately find a sanctuary where once only youthful memories existed.

*A Good Year for Gamma* was 2008, one of the most eventful and memorable years our Fraternity has witnessed in the last three decades.

I will leave you to ponder what was good – and not so good – what was missing; and more so, where you fit into it of all as Gamma Delta Psi huddles in preparation of its 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations in 2009.

# What A Year!

Bill Schmitt (ΓΞ 88)

Secretary – Board of Trustees

What a year 2008 has been for Gamma Delta Psi and Gamma Psi! It was just over a year ago that after a 3 year communication hiatus, Mike Kuch and I found each other. We had no idea of the state of the Fraternity but knew it was not good. At that point we started talking about finding a suitable charity to donate the balance of the Trust Fund to. If it were not for Gamma Psi, Eta and their Brother Education weekend in February, the Trust Fund might have been dispersed by now. What a difference a year makes!

I have a number of fond memories of this year. In April, Brother Stan Miksovsky came home from a tour of duty in the Middle East and some of his fellow Gamma Xi brothers were able to meet up with him in Fort Erie. What a great evening! I realized how much I miss some of my chapter brothers and why our friendships have lasted almost 30 years. Mike Kuch's endless e-mails. Mike keep up the good work, you make me want to work harder to see the project of re-activating Gamma Delta Psi comes to fruition.

The Conclave in Williamsport. Very inspirational! I was able to meet the last active bastion of our Fraternity, Gamma Psi, Eta Chapter. I also got a chance to renew bonds with some of the closest friends I've had in my life. Italia, Laminman, Kuch, Martin, Belcher, Picardat and the list goes on. I'm glad to have you back in my life.

My recent work with Brothers Stockdale and Johnstone on the Lost and Found Committee. I'd love to learn 5% of what you guys know about Fraternity history. Finally, my work with the current Board of Trustees. It's nice to see a group of alumni that wants to see Gamma Delta Psi have a future. Hopefully we can leave this organization 10% better than how we found it!

In the coming year I look forward to the two 130th GDP / 40th GP Anniversary celebrations planned for south and north, working with Johnstone and Stockdale uncovering lost alumni and history and working with the Board of Trustees to put in place the infrastructure needed for expansion. Hopefully, we'll announce our first Crescent Club in over 20 years some time in 2009.

Happy Holidays to all my Brothers and their families.

# Thanksgiving Dances of the 60's!

Danny Wyatt (ΓΔΨ~ΒΠ / ΓΨ~Β)

Mike, one of my favorite Gamma moments were our Thanksgiving Dances of the late 60's.... often times held at what was once the Hotel Petersburg... which at this time was a very nice place. It amazes me to look back on these with the knowledge that 16 year olds were signing contracts for hotels, bands.... etc. And these dances were BIG... remembering that we dressed up as if these were what we now call semi-formal. It also served as a reunion type thing as graduated brothers could come back and there was never a concern that the police would show up and arrest them for "contributing"..... Which there was often way too much of and took place in many various forms.... Enough said.

Anyway, these dances were always packed... on the dance floor we would be so cramped that our dancing lent itself to what would be termed later in the 80's as the bump... Almost always every southern chapter would be there, and always during a band break after we all had reached a point where we thought we could sing, we would all gather on the dance floor.... Brothers only that is ...with our arms draped over each others shoulders and singing in our finest voice, "Like a River's Flowing Waters..."

These were the kinda things that as young men.... boys, actually ... we were able to grow in bonds, and truly the first place where I came to know Brotherhood.

# January: 33,536 Days Later

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

I did the math, calculating some 33,536 days after Gamma Delta Psi was founded, something peculiar happened. It was re-born, igniting unrivaled passion in a manner no less than it had witnessed from its earliest days.

While the Brother Education Weekend last February is rightfully accredited as the start of the new reactivation movement for Gamma Delta Psi, which I will cover in the next section, a month earlier in January is not only where the calendar year began but much of the dialogue about what was then unknown transpired.

At this juncture, the players in discussion are limited in part because Gamma Delta Psi had been dormant for so many years, save for intermittent conversations between Brother Bill Schmitt and me, and of course, others spread throughout Ontario and Virginia. From the south Brother Larry Belcher maintained contact, and certainly Grand Brother Kevin Stockdale came to be an omnipresent voice and influence. Brother Mark Laminman soon joined in email discussion, and his impact was made much more prevalent by his return to live in Ontario after many years residing in Western Canada.

To better understand how Gamma Delta Psi became involved in Gamma Psi's gathering of Alumni and young Brothers of Eta Chapter (Longwood University), we must go back several months to an impromptu phone conversation I had with Bill Schmitt. Then, it was basically Bill and me, and a very disconnected Board of Trustees, who had not met since the mid 1990s. Our conversation touched on many topics and issues, but essentially came down to the simple matter of 'What do we do now?'

I will admit to firing off one of the most mundane rhetorical questions, which I believe Bill actually answered. I looked at matters as a choice of either we get this whole thing kick-started again – at this point I feared and loathed Bill's forthcoming response knowing the wheels had been turning in his mind for some time, and could feel we were about to embark upon a year-long (life time) journey – or, as I had suggested we find a worthy charity and donate the nearly \$13,000 we had sitting in The Trust Fund untouched for the better part of a decade-and-a-half.

The third option was to throw an enormous party and call it a day, but I don't recall ever verbalizing this thought to Bill.

Bill, always of the logical and responsible mindset, suggested we first contact Mark, that is, if we could find him, and we did in time. After that, a snowball effect built ever so slowly until there was a re-connection of Brothers throughout Ontario. The South, it should be noted was light years ahead of the North in this regard. Under the auspices of Brothers Randy Picardat, Dennis Breckenmaker, Danny Wyatt, Larry Belcher, John Cobb, and many others (of Gamma Psi and Gamma Delta Psi), an informal Alumni group had met for monthly Saturday breakfast on a regular basis for more than ten years.

It is this group, as cohesive and unified as the syrup they smothered on their pancakes, which kept Gamma intact and alive. While the North had sputtered by the dissention of the lasting standing International Board of Control and the scattering of the Board of Trustees, the South survived graciously to hold on to the last vestiges of active Brotherhood.

Later in the month, I had received word from Larry Belcher about a strange and peculiar occurrence, which was nearly impossible to fathom, yet became the rallying cry and conduit for so many things, which have happened this year. Larry mentioned in his 'Can't be denied' voice and manner, that Eta Chapter in Farmville, Virginia – *who, what, where, why, how?* – is alive and kicking, and had contacted Brother John Cobb (a past International President of Gamma Psi).

The story is near legendary now, and will go down in the annals of Gamma History how Fraternity came back to life from the most humble of starts; a phone number and name (Brother John Cobb) discovered by a young firecracker Brother by the name of Trent Armitage.

From there, The Brother Education Weekend was born, and history started to repeat itself. I immediately called the caterers, the band and the liquor and beer suppliers, notifying them that there would be no party. I was going to Farmville.

# February: The Farmville Weekend

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

Farmville, Virginia has a tall sense of self-deprecating humor, something I learned within minutes of arriving there. That in itself is not the most interesting part. The circuitous route of getting there almost played a major role – along with some messed up weather – of re-shaping recent Fraternity History. Fate was (barely) on our side.

If, as once suggested, Gamma Delta Psi had indeed died several years earlier in St. Catharines, Ontario, then look no further to its resurrection in the not so sleepy hamlet of Farmville, Virginia, home to Longwood University and Eta Chapter of Gamma Psi Fraternity.

Again, I'll venture back a couple weeks, when Brother Bill Schmitt had a conflicting social schedule and was unable to accompany me to Virginia for the Brother Education Weekend. Left alone to my own devices, one of two things typically happens when I travel. First, I am sure to find trouble is the most dubious of situations, and second, I will be either delayed indefinitely or get lost, but usually it's a combination of both.

In February it is wise not to drive through Ontario and onto the New York and Pennsylvania highways in route to milder climes of Virginia. Heeding my own advice, I booked a discounted flight out of Buffalo with the reasonable hope of landing safely and warmly in Richmond. On that fateful Friday, I left Toronto at predawn to catch a 10 AM flight from Buffalo to Richmond, with a planned stopover in Philadelphia. The day was as crisp and clear as any in the month, but the US Eastern Seaboard did not fair as well. When I found myself at the American Airline check-in counter – along with a several dozen like-faced Buffalonians and miserably displaced Virginians – only to learn that much of the east from Maine to the Carolinas had shut down due to freezing rain.

My original flight had been canceled, and the weekend – one I had eagerly anticipated for weeks – was also in jeopardy of being lost. Hope was found some time later when weather miraculously cleared in Philly – my stopover – but the next flight available was several hours later. I was relieved to discover I would make the trip, albeit, somewhat late. 'Delayed' – I soon found out in Buffalo – is airport code for 'Whatever' or more apropos, "Whenever we feel like it". When I finally landed in Philly it was raining and I had to jump terminals via shuttle bus to connect with my flight to Richmond, which was scheduled to leave about twenty minutes before I landed.

So, while stranded in the City of Brotherly Love did have a charming ring to it considering I was on my way to a Fraternity function, but anyone who's been there knows the moniker is really tongue in cheek. Love is certainly not ever in the air, especially so at the airport. The aforementioned American Airlines, I assume is run by a core of hamsters, most humanoid in appearance, all resplendent in their smug paramilitary gear content to make you suffer with erroneous directions and flight information.

My butt finally found its way to Virginia, some five hours later – an excursion of some 17 hours by car-plane-shuttle-shuttle-plane-car. My luggage, however, enjoyed the weekend in North Carolina., which I reunited with on Sunday morning back in Farmville. I have learned not to piss off AA employees while in flight.

The Brother Education Weekend was nothing less than phenomenal; an unforgettable late Friday night soiree at a knock down, close-to-hole-in-the-wall, rocking little joint called Mc....., - of the ill-famed "What Happens In Farmville, Stays in Farmville (and 5 surrounding counties) T-Shirt, which would have served admirably as my second home a quarter century earlier; the Saturday Education Session at Longwood University attended in force by the young and eager Eta Brothers of Gamma Psi, and the dedicated Alumni from Gamma Psi and Gamma Delta Psi, henceforth, known collectively as 'The Usual Suspects': Wyatt, Stockdale, Picardat, Belcher, Smith, Slate, Simmons, Felty, Tutwiler, Cobb, Dunnavant, et al.

Several Brothers – many of the aforementioned – took the podium to share their Fraternity experiences, blending humorous anecdotes with heartfelt memories, recollections of their triumphs and greatest achievements in Gamma.

The Saturday afternoon lunch under the canopied rooftop of a local roadhouse was a mid-weekend highlight, made ever more memorable by Brother Rick Tutwiler, one of the softest spoken but most commanding voices of the weekend, who without fanfare or boast paid the tab for lunch for some 20 odd Brothers. Once again, here's to Brother Tutwiler, for his immeasurable generosity and act of kindness. Not to be forgotten.

Saturday night was something altogether different as generations of Gamma melded at the Eta House Party, and for the sake of decorum and to protect the innocent I will leave the messy details to folklore. Suffice it to say, it had a happy ending. It was the quintessential event of the young year, hinting at the hope and promise of all to come.

# March: The Grip Returns

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

Farmville did it for me; there is simply no other way to say it. I was lit up – along with The Usual Suspects – by the unbridled energy and enthusiasm of Eta Chapter. So inclined, I had to share what I experienced with Brother Bill Schmitt in hope that he, too, would catch the ‘Garnet Fever’ and pass it on. And so say, Bill got it, is about as understated as claiming fish like swimming.

The Grip – Gamma Delta Psi’s Monthly Newsletter – returned after an absence of at least a dozen years. It had been more than twenty years since I had last published an issue as IBC President (circa 1986). The March Edition had a circulation of only a few dozen – sent via email and published digitally for the first time in full color – it had indeed changed with the times. Articles were short, citing the Brother Education Weekend at Longwood University, and listing potential future events such as the Pennsylvania Conclave and forthcoming 130<sup>th</sup> Gamma Delta Psi & 40<sup>th</sup> Gamma Psi Anniversary Celebrations in 2009. There is mention of future issues of The Grip, citing special sections – most to my chagrin I have yet to formulate – and plans to establish a website.

Most importantly, The Grip continued in the long tradition as a viable means to communicate newsworthy events and relevant articles to the Brotherhood of Gamma, and hopefully, beyond. It has grown monthly, both in breadth, interest and distribution, and spawned offshoots such as our website – [www.gammadeltapsi.com](http://www.gammadeltapsi.com) – and two Web Blogs. It remains a focal point of connecting with Alumni.

March also ushered in a non-stop flood of emails, perpetuated by the historical events of previous months, chiefly the Farmville Weekend, arguably the most important Fraternity Event of the past 30 years (save for The Williamsport Conclave).

Dialogue continues on key issues surrounding the re-structure and governing of Gamma Delta Psi and Gamma Psi. A month prior to the 129<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, discussion grows in support of a combined GDP/GP Anniversary Celebration for April 2009.

# April: Founders Day CXXIX

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

April 13, 2008 – a Sunday – witnessed one of the busiest (in memory) days in communication for Gamma. Alumni Brothers engaged in emails and phone calls throughout the Crescent. Too numerous to mention were the borage of electronic correspondence and calls emanating throughout the month. Revered names from the past: Grand Brothers James L.S. Fermoile, Kevin Stockdale and Barry Yeates became more frequent and visible supporters of the new movement toward rejuvenation. Kevin’s role in fusing relations and mutual goals between the north and south, Gamma Delta Psi and Gamma Psi, youth and experience, came as one of the most important aspects and a major contributor to the continuance of our efforts today.

We welcomed back into the fold Brother Frank Wilson (Alpha Chi 2C) – International President 1958 – receiving warm words of encouragement, and many other Gamma Alumni such as Brother Bob Miller of Alpha Omega Chapter, whom had posted an AO Chapter Webpage.

Sadly, Nirvana Chapter gained another member two months previously, but first reported in The Grip: Brother William (Bill) Stephens (Alpha Phi 1C), passed on February 15, 2008; affectionately known as ‘Willie’, Brother Stephens is credited with being one of the founders of Gamma Delta Psi in Canada, serving on the Board as Secretary to (Grand) Brother James Fermoile (then President) during the mid 1950s.

The gradual but persistent restructuring and governing of Gamma Delta Psi takes a step forward with the appointment by Brother Mark Laminman (Chairman – Board of Trustees) of Michael Kuch as President Pro Tempore.

# May: One Gamma, or Two?

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

As freshly appointed President Pro Temp – reported in the May Issue of The Grip – work continued with the Board of Trustees taking over daily governance of Gamma Delta Psi in accord with The Constitution, re: Page 30 (and on): Article VIII Board of Trustees, Part A Structure and Duties, Section 4, The duties of the Board of Trustees shall be as follows: (b) To take charge of the fraternity in the event of the inability of the IBC to function in accordance with the Constitution.

This is an important period in the (recent) History of Gamma Delta Psi, as the Trustees exercise their Constitutional Right (and Obligation) to manage the Fraternity. With the events leading up to the unified decision to enact Article VIII, now behind us, Gamma Delta Psi moves forward with plans for growth and restructuring.

New dialogue between the standing Board of Advisers of Gamma Psi and the Board of Trustees of Gamma Delta Psi commence surrounding amalgamating both Boards into a Union to serve the two Gammas. While there is no formal proposal or draft, discussion is lively and relevant but respectfully splintered amongst the so-called Traditionalist and Neo-Progressive camps. Not until the Williamsport Conclave in September, will there be a resolution (of sorts) regarding how to proceed.

“Organization Growth As A Process” – written by Brother Laminman – is published in The Grip, citing the groundwork on how to plan and build a successful organization. In time, it becomes the building block for the Fraternity’s future plans of structure and growth,

# Summer 2008: Conclave Beckons

Michael Kuch (ΓΔΨ~ΓΑ / ΓΨ~ΡΑ)

The Summer of 2008 held more promise for Gamma Delta Psi and Gamma Psi with plans for the upcoming Williamsport Conclave on September 12-14.

Our Monthly Newsletter is published once during the summer under the familiar banner, ‘The Garnet & Silver’, as an ode to Grand Brother Fermoile’s recollection of its earliest days when it was called such. The Grip moniker had been introduced back in the 1960s by Grand Brother Doug Jamieson; actually shortened from the ‘International Grip’ as a way to encourage better communication between Chapters and the Board.

The Conclave is a whirlwind of emotions and business crammed into an abbreviated weekend schedule. It is in my opinion, an event some 15 years past due, and the true start of formally rebuilding both Gamma’s. Friday Night was re-named ‘GOGANSTOCK’ with good cause, as Gamma Nu Alumni Jim Gogan and Kevin Stockdale hosted a Hospitality Suite resplendent with Chapter History and all the requisite jocular and socializing amongst some twenty Conclave Registrants. With a theme no less inspired by the forthcoming International Oktoberfest, Brothers imbibed in the rich tastes of regional and imported beers representing their own domestic (and favored Breweries).

The actual business portions – two Saturday sessions – started with some in trepidation on how to proceed with the agenda’s topics, but soon developed into encouraging dialogue and positive resolutions, which continue into 2009.

Several rewards were given during the Saturday lunch (banquet): The Alpha Award was presented to Brothers Bruce Johnstone (Gamma Alpha), Mark Laminman (Gamma Xi), Randy Picardat (Gamma Epsilon) and Bill Schmitt (Gamma Xi). The newly created Tau Pi Award named in honor of our Late Brother Tim Poe (Gamma Theta) was presented to Brother Larry Belcher (Tau Pi #1) and Brother John Cobb (Tau Pi #2) for their contributions to Gamma Delta Psi as Brothers of Gamma Psi Fraternity International.

**GAMMA DELTA PSI 130<sup>TH</sup>**

**GAMMA PSI 40<sup>TH</sup>**

**ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND**

**ALUMNI MEET & GREET**

*Friday, April 17, 2009*

**REUNION DANCE**

*Saturday, April 18, 2009*

**FAMILY PICNIC**

*Sunday, April 19, 2009*

**All details to be finalized  
Tri-City Area, Southside Virginia**