

IN THE MONTH OF ROSES

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The Administration Building at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri.

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night and, although he had a way with verbal expression, his penmanship left something to be desired. If time permitted, he had his class papers and reports typed before he presented them to his instructors.

He had a prodigious memory for names and faces. **Hoffman** recalls that by the time summer school was over **Nieman** could match names with the faces of more than half of the 1,500 students on campus.

Barney Cott and **Billy Billings**, who had been students with **Nieman** at William Jewell before the World War, also lived downstairs. Upstairs, **Leland Hoback** and **Emmett Ellis** shared the room on the northeast corner while **Carl Chapman** and **Rodney Herndon** lived in the southeast room. **Ed Hoffman**, a resident at **101 Ming** for three years, lived with another student while **Willard Salter** and **Frank Gorman** were roommates.

Literary Societies Dominant

Ellis and **Nieman** were considerably older than the others, each being 30 at the time and veterans in the teaching field. **Nieman**, however, was the only resident who was married, having left his wife and baby daughter in Iowa while he came to **Warrensburg** for the summer session. With the exception of **Gorman**, who was 18 and had completed one year at the **University of Missouri**, and **Hoffman**, who had a teaching assistantship at the college, everyone at **101 Ming** had teaching experience in the public schools of rural Missouri.

Ellis had lived at the “*House of Trotter*” for the first few weeks of the summer term in 1917.

IN FACT, IT WAS ON **THAT**
CORNER ON THE **EVENING**
OF **JULY 6** THAT **HE** AND
SEVERAL CLOSE **COLLEGE**
FRIENDS DECIDED TO
ENLIST IN THE ARMED
FORCES **TOGETHER.**

Among this group were representatives of the three men's literary societies, the only social organizations on the campus. Literary had dominated the social activity on many college campuses in the early twentieth century and Central Missouri was no exception. Male students could choose between the Athenians, the Irvings and the Baconians.

Several of the men at **101 Ming** had joined a literary society before the World War. The societies were held together largely by what the army has called esprit de corps and there were fierce rivalries between the groups, particularly in the debating activities. Friendships formed were usually transitory at best and the groups often provided nothing more than a chance meeting place for fellow classmates. Meeting places often consisted of vacant classrooms on the campus, reception rooms in dormitories or in a rooming house parlor.

Service together in the battlefields of France provided a new dimension of friendship for the group of **Warrensburg** students who

had enlisted together. As members of the Ambulance Company 355, **Ellis and Leland Hoback** served alongside **Ed Grannert** and **Glenn Parsons** to transport the wounded soldiers from the regimental aid stations to the fields and base hospitals.

Sharing the anxiety of their many comrades in a game of life and death, they served shoulder to shoulder, coming to know each other for their true worth. Joys and sorrows of one were shared by all and, in the words of Glenn **Parsons**, “you remember men for that inward God-given sense of service, responsibility and affection for their companions.”

All men were brothers, or so it appeared to these young men whose education had been interrupted by war.

Sense Need for Fraternity

When they returned to the campus, much of the attraction which the literary societies had held prior to the war was missing. In fact, those who lived at **101 Ming**, began to talk of the need for an organization which would cut across the boundaries imposed by the societies. "Lines were drawn so closely," **Ellis** recalls, "that we were not privileged to fraternize with members of other groups."

Nieman sensed almost immediately the desire on the part of his fellow students for a fraternal organization in the truest sense. He and Billings had become familiar with fraternities while they were at William Jewell and knew something of the benefits to be derived from closely-knit organizations.

Doubtless he also saw the need for more suitable and more permanent meeting places

which would provide a wholesome climate for college men to become better acquainted with their classmates; an atmosphere in which friendships could be nurtured and develop into enduring associations with great meaning for those involved. Indeed, if the development of such a fraternity became his goal, according to **Hoffman**, "he was the man ideally suited to initiate and implement." His outgoing personality, crusading zeal and organizational ability were personal ingredients necessary to accomplish his aim.

Phi Sigma Pi, a professional honor fraternity for men in education, was the only Greek letter organization on campus for male students. It had been founded at **Warrensburg** in 1916 for undergraduate students for the purpose of challenging men “to attain the same high scholastic standing and professional leadership” that Phi Delta Kappa was achieving in graduate schools.

Several of the men involved in discussions concerning a social organization had accepted invitations to become members of Phi Sigma Pi but, nonetheless, felt the need for an organization which would have as its primary goal the perpetuation of lasting friendships.

"Bull sessions" was the term for late evening discussions in 1920 and they were held nightly on the front porch at **101 Ming** and on the stone wall which was at the bottom of the sloping lawn on the corner. "What days those were!" recalls **Frank Gorman**. "As we discussed the possibilities of making such fraternal feelings as existed there among us a cherished experience of many others through the catalytic influence of a fraternity, I am sure that none of us dreamed that we would witness the present development of Sigma Tau Gamma."



Late Evening Discussions

Students from other parts of the campus were invited to the “house” for discussions, some extending far into the summer nights. Various ideas were proposed, but the one that recurred most often was that of a fraternity. Although social fraternities were unheard of in teachers colleges, they vowed to be the first to meet the need that each of them felt so deeply. They were planning for what to them would provide an improved climate on their campus - hence, the loss of a few hours’ sleep was of little concern. A list including names of several men who lived in the house and other students who were known well by the organizers was prepared one evening and **Emmett Ellis** was assigned to post it on the campus bulletin board.

The list, containing the names of about thirty men, was posted **“at an unusually early hour.”** Attached to it was the request that they meet that afternoon in what was known as **Campbell-Irving Hall**, a room on the northwest corner of the Administration Building on the **second floor**. The notice had the proper effect, according to the minutes of the first meeting, as “there appeared a goodly number of interested men to learn what was in store for them.”

One of the founders remembers that it was abnormally hot that afternoon and that the windows were up so they could get some fresh air.

Nieman Explains Purpose

Nieman began the meeting by explaining its purpose and told them what he thought a fraternity could mean to the men of the college. He drew upon his knowledge of fraternities at **William Jewell** in relaying to them some suggestions concerning the internal “workings” of such an organization.

“It was soon found that the proposed organization was just what the men really wanted and a temporary organization was made in order to perfect a permanent fraternity” at **C.M.S.T.C.** With that, **Leland Hoback** was elected Temporary Chairman and **Emmett Ellis** became temporary secretary. The minutes, written by **Rodney Herndon**, illustrate that a sense of destiny prevailed over the meeting, once those who had not been involved during the initial plans were informed of the purpose. They were aware of the importance of the document which they were preparing as they had to present it to a high-minded and conservative faculty. Thus,

“as a result of the Immaculate Conception, during the month of Roses 1920, there was born in the minds of a certain group of college men who had their own, as well as the best interests of the College at heart, an idea regarding the organization of a social fraternity.”

“**Immaculate Conception**” was used advisedly by Secretary **Herndon** - meaning by the grace of God; singular privilege; also, indicating the beginning of time. The poetic phrase of **“During the Month of Roses”** probably was inspired by the beautiful roses which were to be seen everywhere on campus in June.

Although a temporary plan had been agreed upon, other hurdles had to be overcome. They had to enlist a sufficient number of qualified men who were willing to challenge the traditional college landmarks and lead the way in what was certainly a bold adventure.

They insisted upon having a **“fraternity,”** although there was a feeling among some that a negative stigma might be attached because of recent press releases concerning feuds between Greeks at the **University of Missouri**. On the other hand, the fraternity idea offered a challenge to men not far removed from the barbaric influences of war. Several of the men whose names were

included on the list inviting them to the organizational meeting declined. Some undoubtedly were skeptical of becoming involved in an organization which was yet to gain faculty approval. Others belonged to Phi Sigma Pi, the professional fraternity, and considered this to be a sufficient outlet for their organizational energies. **(It is interesting to note that Emmett Ellis and Leland Hoback were initiated into Phi Sigma Pi on June 29, one day after the organizational meeting.)**

Set Temporary Organization

Following the initial meeting, its proponents realized that a temporary organization was needed to formulate a plan as to how they would proceed toward their goal. On July 2, four days after the first meeting, another was called in “Prof. Parker’s room” to discuss more fully their purpose and to appoint committees which would draft a Constitution and a set of By-Laws.

Chairman **Hoback** appointed **Allen Nieman, Ed McCune, Emmett Ellis, Glenn Parsons** and **Frank Gorman** to the Constitution Committee. To the By-Laws Committee he named **Buell McDaniel, Barney Cott, Ed Grannert, Carl Chapman** and **Eugene Hartrick**. **Rodney Herndon** and **Ed Hoffman** were assigned to design a coat of arms and a badge.

Characterized as a **“natural leader”** by the other founders, **Hoback** proved to be an excellent choice as the fraternity’s first presiding officer. He had been a school superintendent during the previous year and his administrative skills were already evident.

Like seven other founders, he was a member of the Irving society and he had also served

with **Ellis, Parsons** and **Grannert** during the war. Under **Hoback’s** guidance, the committees worked hard during the next several days to prepare their reports. In addition to working on the design of the badge, **Hoffman** recalls that he did research in the college library to see if there was any organization named Sigma Tau Gamma which, they thought, had a nice euphonic arrangement. Finding that there was none, they decided upon the name of the new fraternity.

Adopt Constitution and By-Laws

“Those were the days and nights of feverish effort,” **Gorman** recalls, and the committees were prepared to give their reports when the next meeting was called on July 7, again in Prof. Parker’s room. The proposed Constitution was adopted as proposed and the By-Laws were accepted with only a slight change regarding “fines.” **McCune** recalls that some of the founders had “become quite obstreperous” and the imposition of fines was considered imperative if the fraternity was to grow.

A motion was then made “that three copies of both documents be made and that a committee be appointed by the chair to present one of them together with a petition signed by the prospective charter members to the President of the Faculty for action. Motion carried.” Use of the word “prospective” indicates that they did not want to appear presumptuous to the faculty. **Billy Billings, Barney Cott** and **Carl Chapman** were appointed to the committee and the meeting was adjourned.

The three men chosen to go before the faculty were highly respected and well-liked by their

teachers. **Billings** was quiet and unassuming and **“Chappie”** was energetic. **Barney**, who would remain a bachelor, was “the daring young man on the flying trapeze” type and the answer to a beautiful girl’s prayer. The founders believed that if this committee failed to do the job, they might just as well throw in the sponge. Most of the “prospective charter members” were well acquainted with **Dr. Wilson C. Morris**, who had been a beloved member of the faculty at **Warrensburg** since 1906. For many years he had been faculty sponsor of the Irving Literary Society so some of the founders had known him in this capacity. He also taught a Sunday School Class in the First Presbyterian Church which attracted a good number of college students.

As Chairman of the Curriculum Committee and a respected teacher, his opinions were heavily weighed by most members of the faculty. Knowing the importance of having someone speak on their behalf when the petition was presented to the faculty on July 10, a committee of founders approached him to ask if he would support their petition. He agreed to do so and, when the motion was made to act upon their request, Dr. Morris spoke favorably of petition because of the high purposes espoused by it.

With his endorsement, the faculty and administration voted to sanction Sigma Tau Gamma as an official campus organization.

THE BATTLE WAS WON!

The **first** official meeting of Sigma Tau Gamma took place in the room at far left on the second floor.

