

Gamma Phi Chapter of Beta Theta Pi

Late 1940s

By Richard R. Hefton, #722

PREFACE:

The significance of the Mid-Century to world history is not lost on the Gamma Phi chapter of Beta Theta Pi which shared that same turning point in its history. Mid-Century was for the chapter, as it was for a war torn world - indeed an exciting period of restoration and transition from world war to peacetime. It was a time when "boys" who came back "men" - and who hadn't had time to think of themselves as the "Greatest Generation" - returned home to start a life and for many to capture an innocent youth denied.

Those of us who were away from home for the first time and fortunate to have followed conventional life passages were indelibly stricken by the paradoxical role we watched these "men" playing out. Here were veterans ranging in age from 20 to 26 years old busy re-entering peacetime society; shaking off nightmares never experienced or even dreamed of by their fathers; bent on claiming an education they now understood the value of; living in a household infested with scared 18-year-old pimple-faced kids, many of whom had never ventured out of their home county or ever heard of exotic places like Coblenz, Remagen, Leyte Gulf or Bouganville.

The Beta Barn on Chautauqua, sometimes known as the "Post office" was hardly a decade old when the war forced its closure and takeover by the university to be used as a women's dormitory until subsequently returned to the fraternity in late 1945 or 46. (I may hold the distinction of being the only member of Gamma Phi whose sister resided "legally" in the house for an entire semester.)

In 1946 the chapter was predominately occupied by military veterans of all branches ranging from privates who saw limited duty to Air Corps fighter pilots and

combat infantry officers, even a few field grade officers with long tenures on the front lines. The following few years slowly saw the age/life-experience quotient return to normalcy. By the 1947 pledge year a mere handful the pledges were veterans. My pledge year, 1948 - only two men had military experience; Pledge President John Bentley and French Hoehn. Pinning on the Pink and Blue ribbons in 1949 was a lone veteran, Wm. "Bud" Busby, recently returned from occupation duty on Guam.

The college experience in that transitional, mid-century, reconstruction days was without a doubt a unique study in generational mixture. I believe we were blessed to have received valuable big brother, if not fatherly, lessons in maturity those veterans were willing to instill, all the while being careful to not strip the younger members of their own chance to live the undergraduate experience. In retrospect, they were products of war-induced pre-maturity but determined to go back in time not to regress but to live it. Mostly, they tried hard to make it like they had imagined it would have been had they not been denied that time which we all cherish more and more as we grow older.

The result of this singular historical interlude was an once-in-a-lifetime healthy experiment. To this point, I found a comment by Lannie Keith in his remembrances to be interesting, if not revealing of the times? Keith remarked "that after three years of military school," at NMMI, "I found 'Hell Week' at the fraternity house childish and stupid." Most of us would agree, but curiously, much of it was designed and executed by men who had endured the real thing. Sure, we were subjected to the idiotic hazing carried over from "antebellum" days reminiscent of the Roaring Twenties, yet to a

large degree administered by experts in guerilla warfare. To many it taught a number of valuable lessons to see them through another international conflict poised just around the corner.

Even so, at times their foxhole bravura was reversed on them much to their regret. Pledges can be resourceful - as you will see later.

Veterans initiated prior to entering WWII and affiliated with the chapter as undergrads or grad students as late as 1948 included: R.L. "Bob" Lunsford, '39, H.T. "Howard" Baugh, '40, J.B. Baumert, '40, E.E. "Everett" Berry, '40, Joe E. Johnson, '40, K.L. "Kenny" Spence, '40, S.B. "Stratton" Tolson, '40, S.T. "Sam" Allen, '41, B.E. "Bennie" Bell, '42, H.D. "Dale" Cook, '42 and R.M. "Ralph" Tolson, '42. Several of these members and others who were initiated in '46 and thereafter were re-called and served again during the Korean Police Action.

BETA RUSH:

Summer rush and rush week were a strong combination of fun and frustration in the late 40s and 50s. The rush for hotshot prospects sometimes commenced as early as the rushee's junior year in towns where competition was great. There the parties were heavy duty throughout the summer months with travel to the big parties in OKC, Tulsa, Ardmore and Muskogee.

Doc Charles Ed White's lodge at his farm on the Arkansas River was an annual headliner featuring Barbequed Chickens, Trap shooting and some late - to - all - night card games. Perennial chair of that event, Sam Caldwell (a Westminster transfer) once stayed the night entertaining pledges at the poker table only to realize after the game broke up at daybreak he'd invested the entire expense money provided by his dutiful local alums and he was unable to pay

the cooks and other hired hands. He put off the help for a day while he enlisted a few other members to re-trace the alumni rounds to the likes of Hays Holiday, Bill Hayes and W.S. "Bill" Warner, explaining Sam's unfortunate "cost overruns."

Tulsa and Oklahoma City parties were more sophisticated, often held at country clubs or at impressive alum's homes and generally included pin-mates for members and blind dates for rushees. That practice followed suit over the years and some of the 40s/50s undergrads got a taste of their own medicine when time came for them to finance the activities when their own legacies came forth.

The large alum group in McAlester, as an example, faced the challenge in the mid-sixties when they began to realize a number of legacies were lining up for a trip to Norman and the Sooner campus. A blind call was made to the house inquiring about rush plans. The call came to the everlasting delight of Rush Chairman J. William "Bill" Conger, '63, who had just lost the old reliable Ardmore blowout. What resulted from that call was a long weekend affair complete with dates, dances and house parties. That association lasted for several years and paid big dividends in keeping Beta's influence high in McAlester and eastern OK. Leading the effort were brothers carrying low chapter numbers such as Elmer "Bud" Hale, Jr., '37, Cecil Hardeman, '39, Paul T. Million, Jr., '48 grad and J. B. Baumert, '40. Putting up both money and doing the duty were brothers Robert L. "Bob" Bartheld, '51, Fred G. Turner, '52, E. Brad Million, '51 and Wm. G. "Bill" Blanchard, '47. With a great Beta tradition funds and moral support continued to finance the soon to be annual event from Hal Savage, '49, Col. Joe Wolfenberger, '52, Charles Priddy, '53, Cmdr. George Lampton, '51 and George Quincy, '59.

Rush Week itself was both a fun and stressful experience. Fraternities were allowed to sign "dates" with all prospects, while

rushees themselves were limited to six half-day formal visits where bids could be proffered. Rushees had the option of accepting bids and pledging "at will" or to run the table by enduring all six dates. Once that decision was made the game could not be changed. Most fraternities tried to be in line to make first date with their primary targets and to influence those rushees to pledge at will so they could preempt any competitive move by some other house. In addition, those "new" pledges (Ex: Thomas H. Sterling, Jr. '48, #717, son of T.H. Sterling, '21, #207) could then be used for trolling purposes as a shill to help rush their friends who might file through the house during later dates. When a prime rushee was scheduled for the Gamma Phi house on one of the later dates, especially if stiff competition had an earlier shot at the bidding, it was good tactics to induce those rushees to "go all the way through" to bid house as a means of preventing the rushee from submitting to a "hot box," thus never making it to the Beta house.

Most legacies in those days were particularly fine prospects and given a first class rush. Occasionally, however, one who failed to make a good first impression received the grossly unfair label of "Squirrel" or "Closet Boy" and stories long circulated that one such was indeed physically closeted until a group of alums showed up looking for him. Likewise, it was not always that active members or their alums from the same locale were in complete agreement on the value of a particular rushee. Tactics often got interesting as a member supporter of a rushee would attempt to find ways to divert an opposing member when the chapter met to send The Box around. I recall calling a box early on one occasion because I knew my fellow Muskogee member, Mac McAlister, '47, was tied up on kitchen duty and would not be available to trump my vote. Mac hit the head of the stairs on "3" as we were coming out of the meeting. Somewhat upset with my ploy, he got over it as all good Betas learn

to do. No doubt were he the author of this report, he could surely recall some gambit where he snookered me.

Some would say the rush system is cruel and unfair. Others would point out that it mirrors life, and especially political life, as these young people will soon discover. Beta at OU, as I observed, was by far the more ethical in its dealing with prospects. I never saw a time in my years when a rushee was lied to or a bid offer was contingent upon first a commitment on the part of the rushee to accept, as many other fraternities practiced. The tactic was used as a way for a fraternity to say they were not "bumped" by other houses and that they had enjoyed a 100% return from all offered bids. That may make good conversation on campus, but Gamma Phi properly took the position that reasonable people know that just doesn't happen and those who shoot square enjoy a good reputation. That policy must still be in practice at 800 Chautauqua considering the long line of outstanding results reflected in outstanding pledge classes year after year.

THE PLEDGE YEAR:

Hazing of a physical nature had been outlawed on campus, at least by the end of WWII, but fraternity paddles hung on walls remained a reminder of "good old days" and warning to pledges that upper classmen still had an upper hand. Not all pledges were clued in on Inter-fraternity rules and occasionally a member might be prone to neglect to pass the rules along to pledges assigned to their rooms. As the pledge to Jack Buckley, '47 and L.V. Baker, '47, it was only a few days before initiation in the spring before Roger Clark, '49 learned the paddle was passé.

Blind date parties provided welcome relief from the transition from in August being handsome and brilliant to now in September being informed you are really nothing more than a disgusting scumbag idiot?

Friday night dates were dropped off at their respective

houses at curfew with just enough time to quaff a plate of Joe Charles' enchiladas at the Mont washed down with a couple of torpedoes (a shot dropped into a glass of beer) as a brace for the all night clean up of the Beta Barn. Robert J. "Bob" Young, '48 went into culture shock when he found himself assigned to 2nd floor latrine duty so he managed to get reassigned to the basement club room where he took the entire pledge year to learn how to operate the electric buffer. Otie Burris, '48 was "headmaster" of latrine duty (a pretty good start for a future surgeon) and found a reliable student in Tom Sterling, '48.

Games night in the basement often fell after chapter meetings on Monday. Oh, like "Burning Sands" or the universal favorite "The Mothball Derby!" I remember the terrible "Mung Bucket Races" affectionately named "Phone Drills" where it was definitely considered "poor taste" to get sick in the bucket. Sorry but it did happen! Both McAlester guys, George Lampton, '51 and Hal Savage, '49 claim to still remember the exact recipe for Mung?

A Mothball Derby pitted teams made up exclusively of pledges who contested to see which could first fill a milk bottle with mothballs. The interesting challenge centered on contestants required to move the balls from one end of the club room and drop the balls in the bottle without the use of hands or other appendages. That requirement required the divestiture of garments which at first made participants somewhat self conscious but as the heat of competition progressed vanity flashed away, so to speak.

Burning Sands, conversely, was a real character builder for it was designed to instill honesty even in the face of ridicule by your peers or at risk of public humiliation. Individual pledges were made to strip; blindfolded to again be made self conscious bearing fear one naturally endures with a blindfold as your only garment. Then one by one each were sent down the back kitchen

stairs on their bellies sliding over steps covered with molasses and scattered with ground corn. At the bottom of they were turned on their back, still in the blind, so that an unseen animal (a duck or goose) pecking away helped clean off the cracked corn.

Following that happy experience the blindfolded pledge walked on knees (through more ground corn - thus the "burning sands") in the dark where the blindfold was finally removed. There he faced flood lights which obscured three black-robed inquisitors seated behind a table. The Subject could sense a full house of doubting Thomas's behind but dared not take a look back.

Then the excruciatingly personal questioning began with the admonition that only truthful answers would be acceptable. The slightest suggestion of a less than candid answer elicited a low scary grumble from the crowd behind. As an example of questioning of a personal nature, Bobby Boone, '50, (whose brother Wally, '47, was suspected of a tip-off) was asked had he ever had intercourse with a domestic animal. Boone professed to not understand the question? So an Inquisitor eagerly took the bait volunteering a definition, "sexual relations with a barnyard animal!" Boone's reply was itself a question: "Do cows count?" he inquired. Burning Sands broke up that night after having made it only through the first two letters of the alphabet.

Winter games included the obligatory "Member Take Out." As such each pledge class was expected, as a retaliatory event, to manage to separate some member, particularly one who had done some grievous act against the class, and take him for a memorable "ride," sometimes to the then-Mirror Pond at Memorial stadium or sometimes stripped and left across the river south of town. One such trick backfired as the cunning member stepped up to the window at the 24 Hour Bootlegger's shack; explained his dilemma; recognizing one of his best customers, the bootlegger closed shop and drove the

member home. After the pledges busied themselves celebrating their coup they were unpleasantly surprised at the reception awaiting their victorious return.

Our '48 pledge class had listed so many grievants that the decision was made to take out the one the membership claimed was omnipotent and "could never be taken" - Kenny Spence, '40, a law student; a former Marine fighter pilot and said to have been the boxing champion of the South Pacific Fleet! French Hoehn, '48 was mastermind and project officer. His successful plan launched on a cold midnight in December involved pledge elements carefully removing the door knobs on every member room in the house. The last door entered was Spence's third floor room where a team of the five strongest men in the pledge class managed to subdue him. Our greatest advantage was his wonderment as to why his shouts for help were going unanswered. They were unable to get out of their rooms in time to stop the mission. Spence was driven to and dumped in his skivvies into the Mirror Pond, but even though soaking wet and noticeably chilled to the bone, he complimented the team on its successful mission but refused to ride home inside the car, choosing instead to ride back on the front fender.

A walkout to Dallas that year was a similar success with a nightclub party which included pre-arranged blind dates with Hockaday freshman students. Don Sobocinski, '48, remembers the class skipped out not on Friday as normally expected, but instead left on Thursday before classes. They stayed the night on the floors of Norman's First National Bank as guests of Phil Kidd, '48, whose father was chairman.

En-route to Big D on an other casual Spring outing, a car carrying John Heller, '48, Burke Mordy, '48 and Bill Howard, '48 and Don Stillwell, '48, pulled up behind an OU Geology field trip bus that had stopped with mechanical trouble. On the bus was Warren "Lippy" Fatheree, '46

whom Stillwell induced into join the happy throng. Never mind Lippy had nothing to wear but his field trip gear, Stillwell offered to share his bountiful duds. Trouble was, Stillwell's luggage was left sitting on a curb on the side of the Beta house.

Christmas break 1948 found nearly half the pledges campused for some assuredly unjust transgression and relegated to commence what would become an elongated and mostly ill-conceived excavation known as the Salt Mines. Probably the querulous thing about the SM crew was the obvious absence of the class' usual screw-ups and the distinct presence of the straight shooters? Not being in attendance myself makes it more difficult at this late date to recall the exact roster. At the time, I believe the justification for the excavation was to make room to expand the internal laundry operation owned and managed then by Bill "The Squirrel" Shirley, '47 and his financial partner Bill Meek, '47.

LIFE IN THE HOUSE AT 800 CHAUTAUQUA:

Life in the house was indeed an experience but missed by some such as Phil Kidd, '48, who lived just around the corner, but suffered in his absence which gave his pledge brothers plenty of time to dream up pranks to drive Phil nuts. Denny Garrison, whose Pop was local school super was a regular around the place and too feared to be duped. Lee B. Thompson and his younger brother Ralph had the best of all worlds. They were tasked to spend every Wednesday night at Grandma's over on Elm. She was the widow of Dr. Bizzell, the former OU president.

Their father, Lee B. Sr., was a much-revered Gamma Phi alum and former national officer. The official Beta ring is still given each year in his twin brother Ralph Gordon Thompson's name to the one voted outstanding pledge.

House parties, the Senior Dinner, that Barn Dance, Homecoming decor and floats, the Spring Formal all pretty much looked alike in the period as group and individual pictures attest.

Tuesday evening was "guest" night for friends from other houses. Tulsa and Muskogee members, led by David Fields, '47 gravitated to the table in the Northeast corner of the dining room and when criticized for cliquish behavior, in an attempt at egalitarianism, held it's own guest night nightly by inviting a member from western and northern OK and even on occasion OKC! A kitchen walkout was expected from time to time. Joe Johnson, '40, a law student and WWII - and later Korea - army officer, ran the kitchen with an iron hand. After he relinquished the job walkouts became a little more ingenious. One night then-president Jim Kerr, '47 sat and waited to be served. After a few short minutes it dawned on him the crew had vaulted. Kerr jumped up from his chair and yelled "the Kitchen crew walked out, let's go get our own food, as he dove through the "IN" side door to the kitchen, he learned too late the staff had place a very large bucket of water over the top sill which must have been planned by an engineer because it was a direct hit. That walkout was led by Frank Thompson, '48, then-kitchen manager. Over the next few years Jay Swanson, '51 served his time working up to the head man on the kitchen staff. Jay writes, "I could not have gone to OU had it not been for Beta Theta Pi - that is, giving me a job in the kitchen which I had for four years."

Springtime always engendered conspicuously clever antics. An early spring nocturnal thunderstorm was made for the casement window-closing epic - always entertaining and full of the unexpected. Close to midnight a member would step into the 3rd Floor pledge dorm, quietly tap one pledge at a time, motioning him to follow. Once out of the dorm the member would explain that the storm was about to rage and he needed help closing the windows on the main floor. Members hid behind the couches in the living room to watch the key man direct his mark to the then-Sun Room (Now part of the housemother's quarters) to close the casement

windows intentionally left open. As the freshman member reached out to bring the panel in - up popped Ed Boatman, '47, a veteran, a state legislator and law student wearing a sinister costume including a snap-brimmed hat and trench coat and holding a pistol. Most reactions were predictable - screams, fainting or running AND screaming. But here comes French Hoehn again! That Spring, '49, when Boatman pulled the gun, Hoehn's free left fist met the intruder's nose but that didn't end the program, it ended when the next chump came to the window. Don Sobocinski dove out the window and tackled Boatman as he tried to get away. Variations on the theme sometimes took the unsuspecting helpers out on the street to close car windows where they met a similar fate.

For perhaps the most intriguing and imaginative of all ploys in years - by quite the most unusual circumstance - I was given to enjoy strictly as an observer. Seems I was up late alone in the dining room studying one night in the spring of '50. Seldom was I ever caught doing such a thing alone or otherwise which means it must have truly been some kind of heavenly reward. Well after midnight a mild commotion interrupted the silence. Several underclassmen, whose names I wouldn't reveal even should I recall now specifically who they were (however, George "Pinkie" Lundberg, Dick Martin and Vic Rood, all '48 - along with an unnamed pair from '49 come to mind) asked me to join their prank. I had no dog in their fight but out of fear of becoming a target of their frolic I promised to simply watch quietly.

As they proceeded with their plot a garden hose was connected to the west side of the house; one member quietly opened a window on the first floor and stretched to hand the hose to another waiting in a members room on 2nd near the staircase to in turn hand the hose to another who had very gingerly stolen into the room above belonging to Dick Thomas and Bill Shirley, both '47; an accomplice busied himself removing the

doorknob leading to the hall (a fetish of the '48 class left over from freshman take out successes.). Thomas was the target apparently for some perceived oversight? Shirley was asleep in the lower bunk and Thomas was unfortunately in another world.

The hose was tied to the rail on the foot of Thomas's bed with the nozzle set on blast. All parties then retired to their rooms except for a lone agent whose duty it was to turn the water on full blower and retreat from the premises. There followed a quantity of screaming interjected with some rather colorful language. It took some time for the pair to gather their senses, find the nozzle and shut down the water. But not before a cascade began running down the main stairway. This episode ended "without a trace," I suppose never to be repeated but certainly never uncovered nor punished.

The Spring Formal was a campus coup for Gamma Phi, fresh roses and elegant decor set it apart from formal affairs at OU. Gala parties were not always without a sad toll which attacks every organization at one time or another. After a long night of decorating for the '49 formal several brothers from '47 piled into Rooney McInerney's Olds convertible for a late night run to OKC. Another car missed the S turn on the "Football Road" meeting the brothers' car head-on. Rooney was thrown from the vehicle and left paraplegic. To compound the tragedy, on Christmas break prior, most of that same group was hunting near Enid when Dick Ford, '47 was accidentally killed. (Rooney's older brother had lost his life in a similar incident three years before.)

Another unfortunate tragedy to strike our chapter occurred in 1954 when 23 OU Midshipmen on Summer NROTC Training went down in the crash of a military C-119 aircraft. All were lost and Gamma Phi suffered the loss of two of its finest members, George H. Prentiss, Muskogee, '51 and Lee Wayne Smith, OKC, '51. The '51 pledge class was large, exceptional and very closely knit. A

3rd Floor study hall, George Lampton recalls, was named in their honor as they stood academically No. 1 and No. 4 respectively in their class.

This was the last class of freshmen to live in the house before Cross Center opened as a mandatory freshman residency hall. That event opened the door to a few freshmen "of means," such as: Steve Haines, '54 and E.C. Mullendore, '56 to rent apartments in addition to their Cross Center rooms.

While chapter president in '52 Burke "Square Deal" Mordy, '48, recalls (why we never know) - apparently with a degree of pride - how Dr. Dorothy Truex, Dean of Women, pulled chapter social privileges after taking offense to some small social gathering at the house headlined by his alert social chairman, Doc Jordan, '49, as a co-ed "Pajama Party" - with all implications forthwith. Mordy readily admits his woeful failure to come close to the long term loss of social activities won in record form by the Phi Deltas, who in the Fall of '48 hosted the once annual Miami Triad convocation (with hosting rotating each year between the three Miami frats) which was discontinued and permanently banned from the OU campus after an entertaining and enlightened performance which featured amateur undergraduate volunteer audience participation but headlined by stars who were residents of the Harvey Hotel in OKC.

Don Sobocinski, '48 class scholar, came to OU on a track/academic scholarship where he excelled at both. He had this funny accent. He was from Upper NY State, North Tonawanda. OU and Beta were good to Don, he seldom got home on holidays but found a second home with pledge brothers Mahlon Ozmun and Dick Martin. He was living in the 3rd floor SW corner room with Martin in '51. Martin, a consummate practical joker made a practice of requesting for friends, both male and female, junk mail from questionable sources. A girl friend suspected Martin the origin of her

continuous flow of "unwanted hair removal" advertising. Thus returning from a movie with said "girl friend" Martin and company came home to a mountain of crushed ice which took hours to shovel out.

This later to be PHD-Chem. Eng., Sobocinski, would later become a prime suspect after cases from a Salt Mines Home Brewery blew to high heaven? While on the subject: W.W. "Buddy" Busby, McAlester, '49, introduced a hometown Okie girl to the New Yorker who to this day remains married to the guy with the funny accent - after 54 years!

Bill Ross, '48, remembers the aroma of "Rosie's frying" up in the Mole Hole. I didn't know the studious Ross was so low on the totem pole to be relegated to such wretched quarters. Tom Sterling lowered himself to room there with me our sophomore year because of my high (722) number. The Mole Hole was good for no more than a bunk bed and two chests. Period! Its only attribute being quick access to the back stairs.

Joe Wolfenberger, '52 was a junior transfer from NMMI and says Bill Howard, '48 was among the many brothers from McAlester who gave him the good rush. Joe retired a full colonel after a long career in the Army and lives in Hot Springs Village. AR.

ONCE A BETA ALWAYS A BETA:

Denzil Doss "Denny" Garrison, '46, loved to puff out his chest in mock importance and tell how at gatherings of gentlemen at their local club each would tell that when undergraduates one had been a Phi Gam, one an SAE or another a Phi Delt. "Not me, said the last to speak," Denny would announce pompously, "I AM a Beta." As years have gone by Denny's anecdote is less humorous and more truthful as our associations become exceptionally more valued.

Still Betas through and through; Tom H. McCasland, '51, was recently named a director on the Beta Foundation board and is known throughout the fraternity for his support as well as numerous

philanthropies to the university and many other worthy organizations. We are all proud of Tom and this significant recognition; Hon. Ralph Thompson, once the youngest U.S. District Judge, recently took senior status in the western district of Oklahoma.; James R. "Little Jim" Snider, '49 so called because his senior in the house was James F. "Big Jim" Snyder, '47, recently retired as a physician in Ft. Smith, AR.; He supplies an address in CA. of Alan C. Calkin, also an M.D.; A.M. "Mont" Muldrow, '58, checked in from the ranch in Hawley, TX.; W.M. "Bill" McGee, '47 pledge class, initiated with '50, retired Conoco, VP, living in Sun City, TX. He and another '47 pledge/'48 initiate, Bill Blew were basketball teammates at Old Classen and each big help in intramurals; Jay Swanson, '51, successful business entrepreneur and 10 year mayor of Eastborough, KS.; James D. "My name is Jim Currin and I don't give a Rat's Ass" Currin, '49, says actually he does give one even though he's a PHD in Theoretical Physics. He's retired in Stamford, CT.; Langford Keith, '50, lawyer, rancher now retired but still a "Chile" farmer in Silver City, NM; H.H. "Hal" Savage, '49, retired from Union Carbide with extensive relocation, lives in Rogers, AR.

Me? I've spent almost 50 years editing and publishing newspapers in OK; have owned 10 or more; founded three now operated by a chain; active in newspaper printing and advertising sales companies in OKC area; retired from USAF in 1990 as commanding general, OK Air National Guard.

EPILOGUE:

Very few members of Gamma Phi during this period were overlooked by calls to military duty. Either they were part of that Greatest Generation who came back to set a strong foundation for post war Beta or they finished ROTC or answered a voluntary (or involuntary) call to meet the North Koreans on the peninsula. I am sure there were fine Betas who never returned from service in WWII. I know of only one of our

own who sacrificed his life in Korea. That was Vic Rood, '48.

This Centennial celebration pays special tribute to those Mid Century gentlemen who reestablished our chapter and literally rebuilt our institution. At the risk of missing a few of these heroes I'll name those as best can be recalled: '38 - R.L. "Bob" Lunsford; '40 - Howard T. Baugh, J.B. Baumert, Everett E. Berry, Ross W. Coe, Joe E. Johnson, Kenneth L. Spence, Stratton B. Tolson; '41 Sam T. Allen, W.H. Holliday; '42 - Bennie E. Bell, H. Dale Cook, Kirk Dyer, Ralph M. Tolson. More than a dozen of the first pledge class after WWII ('46) were seasoned veterans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Late last year Doc (as in Warren K.) Jordan and this writer were volunteered to cover history of our beloved Gamma Phi chapter of Beta Theta Pi during a roughly defined period of the late '40s to the mid-late '50s. Neither, being once highly compensated award winning authors-columnists-editors-publishers would have consented to such mundane – non-recompensed charity had we not been locked together in brotherly love; found comfort in being acutely aware as how misery loves company and assured that old chums would come forth eager to register their own vivid recollections.

Jordan and I held several planning sessions after the first of 2007 preparatory to commencing our responsibility in which I took on the task of producing a cleverly designed mailing to Gamma Phi members of the period containing a helpful questionnaire to which very few bothered to answer and most of those gave little detail beyond merely confirming their "fond memories." Then, after Doc pulled what I can only call "the ultimate malingering ploy" I was left with the only option of recording memories in the "first person." As I put a wrap on this record I add my apologies for the vast black hole. I love Beta and Gamma Phi and frankly could go on interminably; not out of subject matter, to the contrary, just out of

steam. I omitted, for example, the great football competition, the Beta/KA "Beer Bowl" which was second only to the Rose Bowl in tradition. As Sobocinski mentioned, we played the '48 game to a 0-0 tie. Lampton claims his '51 class which won 38-7, "It was the first time the Betas had won in 11 years." I'd have to challenge that since I coached the '50 game to a win and have the newspaper clipping to back it up. And that leads me to disclaim connection to any inaccuracies herewith, but with sincere apologies to all the many great friends and brothers who may have not been overlooked.

With special appreciation for their detailed assistance, I want to thank Ross, Lampton and Sobocinski. Contributors of note from Gamma Phi-40/50s: Donald "Don" Sobocinski-'52- - 710; Otis F. "Otie" Burris-'52 - 711; Burke G. "Square Deal" Mordy-'52 - 712; Robert J. "Bob" Young-'52 - 725; Wm. J. "Bill" Ross-'52 - 734; Wm. M. "Bill" McGee-'52 - 775; James R. Snider-'53 - 739; Howard H. "Hal" Savage-'53 - 742; James D. "Jim" Currin-'54 - 747; Langford "Lannie" Keith, Jr.-'53 - 777; Jay D. Swanson-'56 - 812; George Lampton-'56 - 822; James H. "Jim" Wolfenberger-'56 - 848; Alvan M. "Mont" Muldrow, Jr.-'60s - 1050.