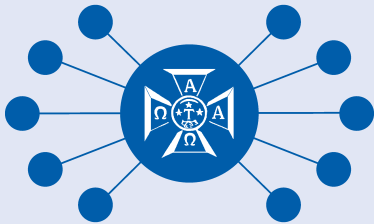


IN THIS ISSUE

Chapter Eternal, Bob Simonds.....	1
A Note From Jack Klues.....	2
Alumni Events.....	2
Scholarships.....	3
House Renovations.....	3
Mike Lavitola Update.....	4
Piano Restoration.....	4
Catching Up With Dan Blaho.....	5
Alumni Networking Luncheons.....	6



CONNECT WITH US!

Let us know what's new in your life! Weddings, births, deaths, career changes, community service... we want to know!

Simply send an email to feedback@affinityconnection.com and reference Gamma Zeta ATO.

Please plan to visit our website at www.atoillinois.com. Go to your online profile and update your contact information, especially your email, so you can stay in contact and receive all of our communications via email!

Other ways to keep in touch: join our LinkedIn group that already has 576 members - <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Alpha-Tau-Omega-University-Illinois-96736/about> and don't forget to "like" our Facebook page, that already has over 100 "likes" at - <https://www.facebook.com/AToGammaZetaIllinois>.



Gamma Zeta News

Gamma Zeta Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity
University of Illinois
www.atoillinois.com
March 2014

CHAPTER ETERNAL

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers " – Robert J. Simonds, 1924-2013

Our great friend, inspiration and leader, Bob Simonds, entered the Chapter Eternal on December 21, 2013.

Bob remained connected, committed and active in ATO until the very end. Just this past year he led all of us in a campaign that raised over \$60,000 for ALS research. He inspired the ATO Rooftop outing in 2012 and the gathering at the Illinois vs. Washington Football game this past fall at Soldier Field that brought so many of us together, some for the first time in decades. Bob also inspired the creation of the document "Legends, Leaders, Lists and Profiles – the Stories and Men That Bind Us - Gamma Zeta – Alpha Tau Omega – University of Illinois" which you can see (after you log in) at our website at – www.atoillinois.com, under the news article titled "There is a destiny that makes us brothers."

Bob was a wealth of knowledge of Gamma Zeta history. Amazingly, he did all of this from a wheelchair unable to walk or talk, only able to communicate via email.

In addition to his generosity, commitment, determination, and leadership, Bob had an incredible sparkle in his eye, zest for life, and sense of humor. Last spring, he was informed that his picture had been recently restored and professionally mounted in the front living room, he responded via email, "I have always wanted to be well hung."

Shortly before Bob passed away, we reached out to our membership and asked guys to email Bob words of encouragement. Many of you did, and Bob's son, John, reported that the family read every one of those notes to Bob and they brought him joy and comfort. It was one of the last things they did before he died.



The note from **Ed Ptacek '54** seems to have captured the sentiment:

All ATO's, as well as everyone he ever met, are saddened by the passing of Bob Simonds. The Illinois Gamma Zetas, like the Simonds family, have lost their leader. What an honor to have Bob guide us for so many years.

No one was more generous than Bob and no one took more joy from giving. I'm reminded of a passage from my early ATO days:

A Creed

*There is a destiny that makes us brothers
None goes his way alone
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own.
I care not what his temples or his creeds,
One thing holds firm and fast
That into his fateful heap of days and deeds
The soul of man is cast.*

by Edwin Markham

That passage comes to mind when one remembers the love Bob bestowed on everyone. He provided the inspiration for many others to continue the virtues of our fraternal organization. Bob will be Gamma Zeta's #1 Legend, a group he cherished almost as much as his family. In addition to Bob's extraordinary gift of generosity, he carried on to demonstrate strength and courage in his final years. Bob was truly exceptional. Bob's journey is over. Now he may rest with Edie, who was also a warm, beautiful person. I'll cherish their friendship forever

There is a wonderful write-up about Bob, his life and his many contributions to ATO at the ATO National website, and his obituary can be found at the Pyatt Funeral Home website.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Catching Up with Jack Klues '77, Gamma Zeta Board of Trustees Chairman

Now that I'm retired, I'm asked how I keep busy. First, I tell them that I am putting the wishes of my wife, Beth, first for a change. Second, I talk about the time I now have to volunteer for causes that mean so much to me, like leading the new Board of Trustees for the Gamma Zeta Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega.

Being an ATO volunteer gives me tremendous satisfaction. I reconnect with an important part of my youth and the fun-filled years as an undergrad. My memories of good times and great friends come rushing back, like they were yesterday.

I enjoy working together with Dane, Greg, BB, Dave, Nobel, Dobro, Jeff, Jeff, and Jeff, and others. We strive to create a more positive pledging process, strengthen alumni



Jack & Beth Klues

relationships, and restore the physical plant (and the piano!) to original glory. Working together, these projects remind me of the quality of men that GZ always attracts... successful, committed, and generous.

It gives me genuine pleasure to share my personal and professional experiences to enrich and accelerate the development of our younger brothers. And, I like playing a role toward protecting the long legacy of our ATO GZ Chapter like so many of our wonderful brothers, including the late Bob Simonds.

I realize not all of you are ready to retire, but I ask you to consider finding a way to share your time, talent and/or treasure with us as a GZ Alumni volunteer. We need you! I am sure you will find it as rewarding as I have!

HOLIDAY PARTY

Gamma Zeta Alumni: Busy with Undergrads and Each Other

In December, over 100 alumni stopped by South Branch Tavern & Grille for our 24th annual "Buy a Brother a Beer" Holiday Party. We had our biggest turnout ever, with representatives from the classes of 1975-2012. Special thanks to **Bill "BB" Barry '77** who backed our tab! See pictures from the party at our Facebook page: ATO Gamma Zeta Illinois.

Then in January, ATO alumni sponsored a Mock Interview Day to give ATO undergrads an opportunity to practice interviewing skills. Sixteen participants got an opportunity to meet and interview with two alumni. Participants felt more confident to approach real interviews. Comments overheard:

"I learned ways to translate resume credentials into talking points."

"I learned that body language is

important."

"I learned that philanthropy is always a plus - always talk about your involvement."

Thanks to the following alumni who volunteered their time:

John Aymond- 1980, Chris Bonds-2008, Douglas Brashler- 2005, William Brennan- 1978, Timothy Derry-2003, Jeff Eversden- 2005, Justin Femmer-2006, Trent Jackson- 2004, Jack Klues-1977, Peter Korst-1976, Richard Korst-1978, Matthew Massucci- 1996, Joseph Patrevito- 2002, Dan Reidy- 2001, Jeffrey Scolaro- 2004, Gregory Scott-1976 and Mark Slocum- 2006

Congrats and good luck to all the undergrads. They did a great job. Alumni



Bill Brennan '78, President of Forsyth Technologies interviews Matt Harasim '15

enjoyed the experience and plans are already in place to do this again next year.

THE CLASS OF 2017

Introducing Gamma Zeta January 2014 New Initiates



Pictured: newly initiated Gamma Zetas

On February 10, 2014 Gamma Zeta active members and alumni gathered to initiate our newest class, most who will graduate in 2017. ATO National CIO Wynn Smiley was there to show support along with alumni **Jim Dobrovolny '70, Greg Scott '76, Jack Klues, Dane Luhrsen, Don Armstrong and Dave Seiler, all 77's, Dave Krug '95 and Jeff Eversden '05.**

This is a talented group of guys who came in with a GPA for this past fall of 3.19, which was above the Chapter, Fraternity and All Men's averages.

Welcome guys! Keep up the great work.

Gamma Zeta Scholarship Winners Announced at Homecoming Ceremony: Up 20 Spots in Fraternity GPA Rankings!

Our undergrads went into last semester determined to make a significant improvement in academic performance. Their hard work paid off and the chapter jumped an incredible 20 spots in campus fraternity GPA rankings. Several alumni committees were formed to advise the undergrads.



Scholarship winners Brett Williams, Sam Less, John Brosnan and Alex Schwartz

But mostly, they just buckled down and did the work needed to achieve the improvement.

Here are the highlights: Gamma Zeta's average member GPA now ranks 17th among the 49 fraternities on campus, a 20 spot improvement since last semester; current member average of 3.1543 outperformed the IFC average for the first time since 2010; the new initiate average was 3.194; **Matthew Siegel** had the highest GPA as a pledge with 3.86; **George Sotos** has the highest cumulative

GPA in ATO at 3.91; **Spencer Stiltz** earned the highest GPA last semester with a 4.0; **Christian Arevalo** won a most improved award by beating his cumulative GPA; **Keith Chinwuba** was recognized having his current GPA beat his cumulative GPA.

Gamma Zeta scholarships represent the second largest endowment of any ATO chapter in the country, and have awarded over \$130,000 cumulatively. Each scholarship is primarily based on academics, community service and leadership. The Heldman Scholarship also recognizes non-varsity athletes; Clausing and Timson are focused on accounting/finance/business majors; Sinnock is targeted towards graduate school attendees; one of the Simonds scholarships funds participation in the ATO

summer education program. Over 20 qualified candidates applied for the scholarships this year.

Here are this year's winners:

Matt Heldman Memorial Scholarship:
Alex Schwartz, Accountancy - 3.22

Frederick C. Philbrick Memorial Scholarship: **Andrew O'Neil** - Math and Statistics - 3.42

Robert J. Simonds Memorial Scholarship:
Robert Kleinhans - General Engineering - 3.02 and John Brosnan - Civil Engineering - 3.36

Richard V. Clausing Memorial Scholarship:
Samuel Less - Accountancy - 3.70

David S. Timson Memorial Scholarship:
Jimmy Lawlor - Accountancy -3.29, **Jack Polancich** - Accountancy - 3.23 and **Brett Williams** - Accountancy -3.57

Thanks to all the alumni for their time and role in helping to further the goals and congratulations to all that succeeded!

HOUSE RENOVATION UPDATE

Phase One Gamma Zeta ATO Renovation Project

In our October newsletter, we reported plans for renovations to much of the chapter house. Thanks to generous donations of over \$300,000 from the Class of '77 and tireless efforts of the renovation team led by **Dave Krug '95**, we're happy to report that plans will be fully completed by the end of this semester. **Art Hasse '61** has made a generous contribution of office chairs and arranged for a significant discount on chairs for the Chapter room.

Dining Room - Replacing old tile with beautiful porcelain tile; removing asbestos in the ceiling; hanging newly stained original beams; replacing most of the drop ceiling with drywall; installing light fixtures, fans, plasma TV's, wireless hotspot locations, central heating and cooling system (entire house will be air conditioned for the first time in 30+ years) and a central sound system in the ceiling with speakers and wireless access so the undergrads can play music from their phone or wireless device; replacing paneling with drywall; replacing or refurbishing doors and windows; removing 2 existing openings to the TV room and replacing with trophy cases; purchasing tables and chairs.

New TV Room/Lounge (this was the extension to the dining room in our day): Replaced old window wall with brick veneer and windows. Replaced the roof over the TV room; framed a new semi-private room (to serve as overflow for the dining room and student use for social events, card games, and group study.) The

room will have a rich wood detail on the ceiling, wainscoting, and cased openings. Porcelain tile, drywall ceiling, recessed light fixtures, sound system, TV's and wireless hotspots, exterior speakers (so the guys can play music easily while they play basketball or host a BBQ) will be installed. The HVAC system will control this room to provide central heat and air conditioning. New bar height tables and stools will be provided.

Computer/Study Room (this was the Sin Bin): Install a central heat and air conditioning system to help reduce moisture and provide a year-round study area. Fixed and re-conditioned existing work stations; file cabinets and carpet removed; replaced with carpet tiles; emergency lighting, light fixtures, life safety systems, chairs and study lights added.

Chapter Room (the Dean Olson Room) - Removed tile, cleaned wood; provided light fixtures, ceiling fan and air conditioning; painted and will provide new tables and chairs. Lower level between the computer and chapter rooms refinished with porcelain tile, wood stairs, paint, and lighting.



Mike LaVitola '09 Co-Founder and CEO of Foxtrot Ventures

Mike LaVitola '09 isn't wasting time. He's a semester from graduation from the Booth School of Business. He's also co-founder and CEO of Foxtrot Ventures which "delivers drinks, eats and corner store necessities from your iPhone to your door in minutes". Mike was asked questions from the article "Five Questions to Ask to Know if You Have a Killer Business Idea". Here's how he responded to these questions... and more:



if you have good service and a great selection of products, they want to leave the hard work to you. Online grocers like Peapod and Instacart stock tons of items and are a nightmare to navigate, especially on mobile. We simplify the menu, use technology to meet specific tastes and provide on-demand delivery.

We are growing a base of dedicated users.

4. How will Foxtrot make money... where's the leverage to scale?

We use existing brick and mortar stores for inventory and third party delivery services. So, we don't incur costs until a customer has paid us.

5. How will you measure Foxtrot's success?

Growth! Customer growth and adoption will drive revenue and expansion. We measure success by new customers and repeat purchases.

Moving on from Foxtrot... tell us a little bit about you?

I am the oldest of six boys, two of whom are also Gamma Zeta's (Jay '12, Domenic '16). We grew up in the Chicago suburb of Lake Forest. I moved to Austin, Texas after graduation then moved back to Chicago in 2012 to attend business school.

Do you stay in touch with your Gamma

Zeta brothers? If so, who do you see most frequently?

I do! We are an active group. Nights out get planned over our ATO group email. We have our first ATO bachelor party this spring (Anesti Dhima), and I am looking forward to seeing most of the class there.

What prompted you to pledge ATO?

Many of my older high school friends pledged ATO. I got to see their experience firsthand visiting my senior year. After meeting many of my future pledge brothers during rush, I couldn't imagine joining another house.

How was your Gamma Zeta experience?

What are some of your favorite memories of your time at 1101?

My experience was amazing, and I've convinced two younger brothers (thus far) to join the house as well. Playing basketball, grilling out on the patio and any event that featured a concert on the front lawn were always great, as was Walkout in New Orleans.

Finally, how can Gamma Zeta help you succeed? And... what's the code for the Gamma Zeta discount?

The lessons learned about confidence, conviction and doing the right thing carry you in whatever you choose to do. And (as many have already taken advantage), promo code "Taus" always gets you free delivery!

1. What inspired you to start Foxtrot?

After a long day, all I wanted was my favorite items (like a 6 pack of beer, chips and dip) to magically show up at my door. No such service existed.

2. What does Foxtrot do?

It's a mobile app that curates a menu of beer, wine, spirits, fresh foods and essentials, and delivers them to your door in under an hour. We work to find the best items and brands, and get those items to your door as quickly as possible.

3. Who and what is your biggest competition... biggest threats to your success?

Our biggest competition is customers going to the store themselves. We have seen, however,

PIANO TO BE REFINISHED

Efforts to Save the Historical Gamma Zeta Bechstein Grand Piano

In recent years, the Bechstein piano has fallen into disrepair. **Drew O'Neil '14** asked if we could get it restored. That question begged others. When did we get it? Is it valuable? Is it historically significant? Should we restore it? How much will it cost?

We asked some of our oldest living alumni, **Ed Giller**, **Rex Sherman** and **Don Ainsworth**, initiated in the '30s, who remembered the piano but didn't know its history. **Bob Simonds '43** responded to the question as follows, "I well remember the grand piano. I recall its being played, very well, by the late **Gordon Anderson '46**.

Every morning he would play. With a smile on his face, his ivory-tickling helped us start the day. I also remember song practice (yes!) on Wednesday nights when the late **Franklyn Meyer '41** (Song Director) would tune us up to compete in Schem Sing, the annual campus-wide event for men's groups." Still, Bob didn't know anything about the piano prior to his time in the house.

The manufacturer confirms our piano was built in Germany in 1902. Bechstein is a highly respected maker of quality pianos who have provided pianos to Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace and palaces



across Europe. Freddie Mercury, The Beatles, Bob Dylan and Billy Joel have all used Bechstein pianos. Appraisers have put the restored value of our piano between \$29-40,000, and restoration will cost \$25,000. A new piano would cost over \$100,000 today.

History was found in old newsletters. The January 1916 Gamma Zeta News cites the decision to buy a piano. The November 1918 newsletter tells that the chapter was forced to move out for the military during WWI and references the piano. This places the acquisition at some time between 1916 and 1918, nearly 98 years.

So, for 98 years, we have possessed a rare and valuable 112-year-old instrument. It has survived World Wars I & II and over 2,000 young men. Clearly, this is a piece of history worth saving. We received a donation of \$7,500 for the restoration and renovation, which is enough to get the work started. We need to raise \$17,500 to complete the job before next fall. If you are interested in helping, please send a check made payable to "ATO House Corporation" to: Dane Luhrsen, 1944 Hampton Drive, Wheaton, IL 60189.

Dan Blaho '92: "To have no narrower limits within which to work together for the elevation of man than the outlines of the world..."

When Dan Blaho learned the words from the ATO Creed above, little did he know how closely he would take those words to heart. His life's path has run through Slovakia, Indianapolis, China and currently the Ukraine... and he's not done yet. Here he is, in his own words:

Coming from small town Illinois, I was compelled to make the University of Illinois manageable. Joining ATO brought me into a great family who share common interests. I had a great time as an ATO during my undergraduate years. I lived in the house for three years, rooming with **John Kechriotis** my last year. I served as Pledge Trainer for the '92's. (Or was it the '93's?) The greatest memories were the conversations with brothers; planning and dreaming of great things. Sports and social events were outstanding, too. I try to stay in touch--through email, at least--with **Jeff Wohlschlaeger, Mark Daniel, Rob Vyveberg, John Kechriotis, Matt McCarty, Paul Lillig, Jim Van Pelt, Ryan Nelligan, Al Smiles, John Varadian, Bassam Hadi, Jeff Finke...**the list of goes on.

While I was in school I changed my major often, but the common thread was to 'go international.' In 1995, I got an offer to teach in Bratislava, Slovakia (the country where my grandparents were born). I wanted a major that would take me overseas; but didn't discover the field of education until after U of I. I highly recommend the overseas teaching career for new grads. I set off for what was supposed to be 10-months, and became a six-year life-changing experience. Here, I met and married my wife, Mirka. We have since had twin 6-year-old boys Andy and Matty, and baby boy David. Here, the social life was the biggest surprise. I had visited in 1984 when the country was communist. I never envisioned anything social in a return to Slovakia, but quickly discovered that it had changed. There were very few cafes, restaurants, or bars besides what were in the local hotel. There were just the necessities...small shops, outdoor markets, government offices, and housing blocks. The political and social scene was pro-American. It was difficult to practice my Slovak, since so many locals wanted to



Dan and Mirka Blaho and their children

principal for the past three years. My time in Kyiv has been a combination of highs and lows. The Ukrainian people are incredibly warm and welcoming; however, they are also guarded, understandably so. The former government, which was just ousted, was incredibly corrupt and self serving. Red tape in America is nothing like the bureaucracy that Ukrainians see on a daily basis. Something as simple as getting a driver's license or visiting a doctor often involves bribing a public official, or someone who has worked his way into a 'middle man' position. Society was rife with corruption to the point where many Ukrainians simply accepted it as a part of life...until November.

Every stop has been special in its own way. China was mind boggling and completely changed the way we look at things. It was my wife and my first 'true' international experience since we had previously split time between her Slovakia and my United States. China was new for the both us...an even playing field. We don't anticipate stopping in one place for an extended time; however, we are aiming to stay put in one school for the entire 'high school' experience. As for the US, we are always looking at opportunities to return. There are more and more international schools opening up in the US. With almost 20 years experience, it would make most sense to continue down this path, be it overseas or in the US.

As for a location highlight in all these travels, I think this would have to be Tbilisi, Georgia. This place is located at a crossroads. Tbilisi is very European, but there's clearly something else goin' on there a little Asian, a little ancient Silk Road, and a little Middle Eastern. The Georgian people have some incredible cultural highlights like the birthplace of wine making, delicious food, majestic mountains, and beautiful Black Sea resorts. The Georgian people are warm and welcoming. They have a saying in Georgia: "Guests are gifts from God," and they embrace it!

Here's Dan's email address if you'd like to shoot him a note to say hello:

In 2011, my family and I were transferred to Kyiv International School in the Ukraine. I've been high school

dblaho68@gmail.com

GAMMA ZETA NETWORKING LUNCHEONS

Alderman Tom Tunney '77 in February; CEO Cary McMillan '80 in April

On February 28, 65 Gamma Zetas got a chance to hear first hand from **Tom Tunney '77** about his time at ATO, his business career as owner of Ann Sather Restaurants and his rise through the Chicago political ranks to Alderman of the prestigious 44th Ward of Chicago, which includes Lakeview and Wrigleyville.

Alderman Tunney shared interesting comments about Rahm Emanuel's mayoral campaign, his negotiations with the Cubs and the City of Chicago regarding improvements to Wrigley Field, city economics and his own political future. Of note, Tom met Ann Sather through



Alderman Tom Tunney '77

Craig Nadborne's '78 dad and credited his start in the restaurant business to his ATO

connection. Thanks to Tom for joining us, and thanks to **Phillip Coover '04** for hosting us!

Herb Landon '54 was in attendance as a special guest of **John Aymond '80**. (Herb started attending Chicago ATO lunch gatherings back in the 50's when **John Reuttinger '27** presided. John was elected president of the Chicago ATO Alumni Association in 1928 when our initiate #1 Thomas Arkle Clark was a regular visitor to their events.) Also in attendance were eleven former Gamma Zeta Worthy Masters, which has to be among the largest gatherings at one time.

Please mark your calendars for the next ATO Chicago Networking lunch:



- Who:** **Cary McMillan '80**, CEO of True Partners Consulting, our featured guest.
Date: Wednesday, April 2
Time: 11:30 AM
Location: Chicago Club – 81 E Van Buren St, Chicago
Cost: \$45 - cash or check made payable to ATO House Corp at event
Note: This isn't a fundraiser. Cost is for meal and private room.
Dress code: Business or business casual, please no denim.
Registration: Email to daneluhrsen@gmail.com.

Cary McMillan (pictured) is currently CEO and founder of True Partners Consulting and former CEO of Sara Lee Brand Apparel. He serves on multiple boards including McDonald's and Hyatt and is a member of the UIC Athletics Advisory Board. He is a former ATO House Corporation President and former ATO National Foundation Board Member. Come meet Cary and hear what he has to say about how the Chicago business community partners with the city and its nonprofits to build a great place to work and live. Don't miss it!

- In this Issue...*
- House & piano renovations
 - Catching up with Mike Lavitola & Dan Blaho
 - Chapter Eternal, Bob Simonds
 - Chapter Scholarship Recipients

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