

Alpha Mu Gamma

DIVISION VIII THE HISTORY OF ALPHA MU GAMMA IN THE BEGINNING

Soon after the founding of Los Angeles City College in 1929; the five members of the Foreign Language Department (Arthur B. Forster, Maria Goddard, Josephine L. Indovina, Meyer Krakowski, and Lucile Lenoir), desiring to honor excellence, investigated the possibility of establishing chapters of honor societies. However, they found that none was available for lower-division students and began to make plans to organize a completely new society to recognize achievement in any language and bring the students of the various languages together into a cosmopolitan, cohesive, and stable organization.

Mr. Arthur B. Forster, the chairman of the department, appointed an **ad hoc** committee, which reported on September 29, 1930, recommending that the interlingual society be set up during that college year. Steps were immediately taken to select a name, write a constitution, plan a ritual, and design a pin. On April 29, 1931, the Society was installed with eight students as charter members; Mr. Forster as the sponsor/advisor (serving until 1944) and Miss Lenoiras the first of the rotating associate sponsors/advisors.

FIFTEEN NEW CHAPTERS

The success of the new organization inspired the founders to change the Society almost immediately into a national organization. National officers were elected: Arthur B. Forster, President; Ruth Tolin, Secretary, and Meyer Krakowski, Treasurer. Invitations to affiliate were sent to twelve junior colleges throughout the United States and were accepted by two: Phoenix College, which formed Beta Chapter on February 3, 1932, and Long Beach City College, where Gamma Chapter was installed on May 16, 1934. Meanwhile, at Alpha Chapter, twenty-two additional students had been initiated by the end of 1931, and thirty-six more were initiated during 1932.

On June 22, 1933, the **Scroll** was begun as a newspaper to link the chapters together. A certificate of copyright registration was granted on January 6, 1934. In October 1934, the office of Executive Secretary was created to assist the National President and direct the publication of the **Scroll**.

In 1934 invitations to affiliate were extended to four-year colleges, and on June 6, 1934, Delta Chapter was installed at San Diego State College. About this time the leaders of the organization began to feel a need for an alumni organization to foster interest among the alumni in furthering the ideals of the Society; accordingly the Alpha Alumni Chapter was installed on April 6, 1934. In May 1934, charters were given to all chapters, including the chapter.

The National Constitution, written on June 13, 1934, under the chairmanship of Mr. Krakowski, gave a formal structure to the national organization. The Articles of Incorporation as a non-profit corporation were filed in the office of the Secretary of State of California on September 11, 1934.

As a sequel to a visit of Miss Maria Goddard (one of the founders) to Japan, on July 25, 1934, visiting students from Waseda University of Tokyo met with Miss Goddard, who was then the National President, and decided to create the Alpha Mu Gamma chapter of Japan at their University. Proxy formally installed the chapter on October 1, 1934, but World War II ended its brief existence. Meanwhile, on August 16, 1935, Professor Sugimori (the Sponsor/advisor of the chapter) and a number of the members were entertained by Alpha Chapter, and Professor Sugimori was initiated into honorary membership. He was in this country with some fifty students on a cultural exchange program.

Miss Goddard had felt very strongly that the unity of the organization would be increased if the chapters could meet in conferences, which furnish an opportunity for open discussion of legislation. Consequently, the First National Convention was held at Los Angeles City College on December 20 -21. 1935. This began a regular series of biennial conventions.

Chapters were added between 1935 and 1938 in Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; Tempe, Arizona; Worthington, Minnesota; Springfield, Missouri; and Pittsburgh, Kansas.

The influence of Alpha Mu Gamma alumni, especially those of Alpha Chapter, led to the formation of chapters at three campuses of the University of California between 1940 and 1943.

NEW PROJECTS

At the fourth national convention in 1942, the Scholarship and Loan Fund was established under the direction of Meyer Krakowski, the sixth National President, and May E. Williams, a former National President. This fund later became the Marea Goddard Scholarship Fund.

After World War II expansion was at first confined mostly to California. Of the sixteen chapters from Pi (1945) to Alpha Zeta (1957), twelve were in California. The first cycle of the Greek alphabet was completed with the installation of Omega Chapter at Occidental College at Los Angeles in 1953.

In 1955 the alumni of Alpha Mu Gamma, under the leadership of Mrs. Marlyn G. Hoffman, began a nationwide program to welcome foreign students coming to the various colleges, to tutor them in English, and to help them to adjust to life in the United States. Alumni units were set up in several areas, and an international "pen pals" correspondence project was organized for alumni who were not near colleges attended by foreign students.

In 1956 Mexico City College began to offer our membership an annual scholarship for summer study at that institution (Now University of the Americas). Later similar scholarships to Laval University in Quebec, Middlebury College in Vermont, (*all the above have ceased and are not applicable any more*) and the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, were added.; As for the Monterey program, interested Alpha Mu Gamma members have to apply

directly to the Admission Office of the Institute at the same time as they apply for general admission to the Institute.

In 1957 Mr. Krakowski of Alpha Chapter, chairman of the Committee on Cultural Relations, began to sponsor a book collection conducted by all chapters in cooperation with the Asia Foundation. The books were sent to universities in Asia. Mr. Krakowski later reorganized this committee as the National Committee on Intercultural Relations.

NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE WEEK

In 1956 Sister Eloise-Therese, the National President and chair of the foreign language department at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, inspired the Executive Council to take the initiative in making America aware of the need and importance of foreign-language study through the celebration of a National Foreign Language Week. The week of February 17-23, 1957 was chosen for the first celebration, since that was also National Brotherhood Week. On December 12, 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent a telegram endorsing the celebration. Every year since then the Executive Council has set aside a week for the observance of National Foreign Language Week throughout the country, and each succeeding President of the United States has endorsed the Week.

The late Bruce Russell, who received not only the Pulitzer Prize for his cartoons but also recognition from President Eisenhower for his efforts toward greater international understanding by means of his timely cartoons, designed an appropriate poster entitled "Foreign Languages: Stepping Stones to World Understanding". This poster, distributed widely throughout the United States and in sections of Canada, served to make America cognizant of the importance and value of foreign language study. Until his death in 1963 Mr. Russell drew a poster each year and at his death left several designs that were used through 1966. In later years 10,000 posters were distributed each year to state departments of education, school systems, public libraries, and universities and colleges.

The chapters of Alpha Mu Gamma organized campus activities designed to make the American student aware of the vital necessity for foreign language study. Typical activities were newspaper articles; foreign-language contests, movies, and lectures open to the public. A national essay contest was inaugurated during the 1957 celebration and continued for several years.

The Modern Language Association and American Association of Teachers of French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese drew up resolutions in the interest of National Foreign Language Week at their national meetings held in Washington, D.C., in December of 1957. The following publications also cooperated in subsequent years: **PMLA, America, The Bulletin of the Institution of International Education, and The Bulletin of the National Association of Foreign Students' Advisors.**

Vincent X. Flaherty remarked in the Los Angeles **Examiner** on February 20, 1958, "Sister Eloise-Therese probably has launched a national educational trend which very well may put the United States in the lingual running with other nations."

RAPID NATIONAL GROWTH

With the inauguration of National Foreign Language Week, an immediate increase in the number of chapters became evident. In the year 1956 only one new chapter had joined, but by May 16, 1957, five new charters had been granted. This trend continued and even accelerated greatly in the 1960's.

In the spring of 1957, a new trend was begun. Regional meetings were held at the Palmer House in Chicago, at San Francisco State College, and in two locations in Los Angeles. Regional meetings continued to be held though most of the 1960's.

In early 1965 it was found that more than one-third of all active chapters had been admitted within the proceeding twenty-four months...so great had been the recent growth of the organization. As a result of the great increase in income from initiation fees, the Marea Goddard Scholarships were increased to \$200 each and all national dues for members were eliminated, but later on were reinstated. Later the scholarship was increased to \$250, and the names of three of the founders were assigned to them. Later on the scholarships amounts were increased to \$300 each, later to \$400 and then, in 1992, to \$500 each. In 1994, at the National Convention held at Oklahoma City University, a fourth Scholarship of \$400 was set up to cover some of the costs of the Laval University summer scholarship for the further study of French (*now defunct*) Later on the National Executive Council set up another scholarship of \$200, in memory of Dr. James Fonseca, one of the oldest, active members of the Society, for the study of Esperanto (a pet subject of Dr. Fonseca) or Spanish. The National executive Council at its meeting at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Chicago on 19 November 2004, unanimously voted to raise the amount of the AMG scholarships. The three Goddard, Indovina and Krakowski scholarships were raised from \$500 to \$750 each; and in 2006 they were raised once more to \$1000 each; while the James Fonseca scholarship for the study of Esperanto or Spanish was raised from \$200 to \$400.

In April 1965, the "**Newsletter**" began to be printed by offset for distribution to all chapters. To spread the news intended principally for the sponsors/advisors, a new publication, the "**Scroll**", was begun early in 1965. As of the Fall of 2011, the National Executive Council decided that hence forth the Newsletter was to be sent electronically to all chapters.

The growth of the organization required improvements in the filing, the mailing and the office procedures. The National Office began an intensive-recruiting program directed to all colleges and universities in the United States in 1965. The program continues as an on-going procedure.

In 1965 the National Office gathered information about the Launch Literacy program and the American Field Service, nonprofit organizations with aims harmonious with Alpha Mu Gamma's and described them to the chapters with the thought that the chapters might, as chapter projects, wish to aid or support the organizations.

MATURING AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION

By 1966 the growth of Alpha Mu Gamma was accelerating at an extremely rapid pace. Whereas it took twenty-three years for the chapters forming the first cycle of the Greek Alphabet (Alpha to Omega) to come in, the fourth cycle (Gamma Alpha to Delta Omega) took less than eight months, and the fifth cycle (Delta Alpha to Delta Omega) was almost completed within six months. At the April 1966, Convention the Executive Secretary reported that the number of active chapters had increased from 47 to 90 since the previous Convention twenty-three months before.

A trend toward the formation of chapters in state universities was resumed in late 1965 and early 1966, one or more campuses of state universities in the following states having now formed chapters: Arizona, California (three campuses), Indiana, Louisiana (two campuses), Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, South Carolina, and Tennessee. With state colleges and private institutions included, chapters are now to be found in thirty-eight states.

Early in 1966 the hundredth charter was granted to Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and special lettering on the charter proclaimed, "One hundredth charter--a milestone reached." Sister Rosaire, the Second vice-president, conducted the special installation ceremony. Messages were received from founders, national officers, chapter sponsor/advisor, the Commissioner of Education (who stated that he was writing at the express request of President Johnson), the office of Vice-president Humphrey, the Governor of Pennsylvania, and the mayor of Scranton. Incidentally, Sister Rosaire traveled for **twelve hours** by bus to reach Scranton when her plane was grounded by a snowstorm.

Sister Rosaire, with the help of Dr. Winter and Dr. Vial of Fordham University, organized a huge regional conference in May of 1966 on the Fordham Campus. Fifteen chapters were represented, and about 225 persons in all attended. This was the largest regional conference to date in any area. At the conference Sister Rosaire read letters from the vice-president of the United States and from the United States Commissioner of Education. Both of these letters appear in the 1966 issue of the **Scroll**.

In recognition of the growth of the Society, the number of vice-presidents was increased at the 1966 convention from three to eight, and all except the first were assigned to the various areas in which chapters are concentrated. The vice-presidents were given the power to recruit new chapters, to install them upon request, to advise both new and old chapters, and to organize regional conferences. Within a few years the new vice-presidents proved to be so effective that their number was increased to twelve and in 1994 to twenty-two.

Dr. Richard L. Trapp and Sister Rosaire, both of whom served as national presidents, added a new dimension to Alpha Mu Gamma's literature through their material on the significance of the Golden Bough and its ideals. This material is included in the revised ritual booklet and is also found in a folder entitled **To the Alpha Mu Gamma Initiate**.

In 1966, the Executive Secretary was able to report that 117 chapters had been granted charters to date; that the reorganization of the National Office files, mailing system, and other procedures

was now complete; that a set of twelve pamphlets covering various aspects of chapter operation had been prepared and made available for distribution; and that a line of prestige stationary, program covers, pledge ribbons, name tags, napkins, songs, and special pamphlets would be available for distribution at cost in the fall of 1966.

Thus the Society had progressed in thirty-five years from an organization with a single chapter to the point where it was now one of the large collegiate honor societies of the United States, growing at the rate of up to six chapter each month, and from an organization centered in the West to one now spread quite evenly over the nation, with recognition granted to it by the National Government on many occasions.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

During the presidency of Dr. Trapp (1964-1968), it had been possible for him to come from San Francisco to Los Angeles for Council meetings. However, with the election of Sister Rosaire to Albany, New York, in 1968, it became the practice for the president to meet with as many of the national officers as possible in a given area, send out reports, and allow the nationwide members to vote by mail ballot on all questions that had come up at the meeting. That same year the practice was begun of polling all chapters in the election of national officers, since the nationwide character of the organization was making it increasingly difficult to gather a proper representation of the chapters at the conventions.

A milestone was reached in 1971 when the Fifteenth Convention was held for three days at the Palmer House in Chicago, with about 100 members and faculty sponsor/advisor attending from as far away as California and Massachusetts.

In 1971 the campus unrest began to have a noticeable effect on the addition of new chapters, and the number of active chapters leveled off at about 160, with newly installed chapters just about equaling suspended chapters. Nevertheless, at the 1973 Convention in Monterey, California, the Executive Secretary was able to report that the two hundredth Chapter had just been admitted, the location being Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

The growth of National Foreign Language Week made it urgent that distribution of announcements and materials be transferred to an organization, which would have facilities to handle these operations. Discussions with various language groups soon showed that they would be equally unable to cope with the needs of this growing celebration, rapidly becoming more and more popular in the high schools throughout the country. Therefore, an understanding that an attempt would be made to place the celebration as nearly as possible on a self-sustaining basis, with a minimum subsidy from the National Office of Alpha Mu Gamma. This proved to be a very constructive move: Increasing numbers of high schools districts began to be involved in the celebration. Over 5000 announcements were mailed out in 1973 alone.

At the 27th. Biennial National Convention held at Oklahoma City University on 24-26 March 1994; and hosted by the Epsilon Kappa chapter, the late Dr. James Fonseca, sponsor/advisor of Gamma Sigma chapter at the California Lutheran University and former National President of Alpha Mu Gamma (1979-1983), was presented with a special plaque in recognition of his long

services to and involvement in the Society. Upon his demise, the National Executive Council decided to honor his memory through the setting up of a new AMG \$200 scholarship (now \$400) to be known as the "Fonseca Scholarship", for the study of Esperanto (a pet subject of Dr. Fonseca) or Spanish.

In 1967, the Foreign Language Department of Los Angeles City College provided additional office space and office equipment, and a half-time secretary was obtained for the busy period from mid-June. In August 1998, the Foreign Languages Department at Los Angeles City College allocated a separate office for AMG National Office, to be shared with Alpha chapter. .

To commemorate the 40th. Anniversary of National Foreign Language Week, March 1997, the Society reissued the 1st NFLW poster ever published, with some additions!

The 28th. Biennial National Convention was held at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach on 18-21 January 1996. The 29th. National Convention was held at Cedar Crest College in Pennsylvania on 24-27 September 1998. The Thirtieth was held at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut on 29 March – 1 April 2001 and the 33rd was held at Los Angeles City College 20-21 October 2011, to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the founding of the Society.

At beginning of the new Millennium the Society had 314 chapters, one of which is in the US Virgin Islands; and the Greek letter "MU" designation was exhausted and the: "Nu" designation commenced in August 1999. Alpha Mu Gamma chapters number, at present, 347 chapters (November 2011).

The Society established its own homepage on the World Wide Web (the internet). The present **URL is: <http://lacitycollege.edu/academic/honor/amg/homepage.htm>**