THE MOOSE FRATERNITY

Although the Moose fraternal organization was founded in the late 1800s with the modest goal of offering men an opportunity to gather socially, it was reinvented, during the first decade of the 20th century, into an organizational dynamo of men and women who would set out to build a city that would brighten the futures of thousands of children in need all across North America; then, less than a decade later, another, more compact community that would furnish comfort, dignity and security during the golden years of the dependent elderly among its membership.

When Dr. John Henry Wilson, a Louisville, Kentucky physician, organized a handful of men into what was dubbed the Loyal Order of Moose in the parlor of his home in April 1888, he and his compatriots did so apparently for no other reason than to form a string of men's social clubs. Lodges were instituted in Cincinnati, St. Louis, and the smaller Indiana towns of Crawfordsville and Frankfort by the early 1890s, but Dr. Wilson himself became disillusioned at some unpleasant dissension with the fraternal ranks, and he left the infant order shortly before the turn of the 20th century.

It was just the two remaining Indiana Lodges that kept the Moose from disappearing altogether, until the fall of 1906, when the outgoing young city clerk of Elwood, Indiana, one James John Davis, was invited to enroll into the Crawfordsville Lodge. It was on Davis' 33rd birthday, October 27, that he became just the 247th member of the Loyal Order of Moose.

Davis, a native of Wales who had worked from boyhood as an "iron puddler" in the steel mills of Pennsylvania, had also been a labor organizer. Knowing that moose in the wild were large, powerful animals that used their size and strength not as predators but as protectors of their young and weak, Davis immediately saw potential for human Moose to build great size and strength, to protecting their own as well. A much larger, more powerful Loyal Order of Moose could, he envisioned, provide security for a largely

working-class membership.

In 1906 America, little or no government "safety net" yet existed to provide benefits to the wife and children of a breadwinner who died or became disabled. So Davis proposed to "pitch" Moose

membership as a way to provide such protection to the workingman at a bargain price—annual dues of just $5 to $10. The leadership of the moribund Order happily gave him a green light and the title of "Supreme Organizer," and Davis set out with a few well-chosen colleagues to solicit members and to organize Moose Lodges across the United States and southern Canada.

Davis' marketing instincts were on-target: By 1912, in just six years, the Order had multiplied, from 247 members in two Lodges, to a colossus of nearly 500,000 in more than 1,000 Lodges! Davis by now was appointed the organization's first chief executive with the new title of Director General, realized that it was time to make good on the promise he had envisioned. The Moose first began a program of paying "sick benefits" to members who became too ill to work—and, more ambitiously, Davis, along with Supreme Secretary Rodney Brandon and other Moose officers, laid plans for a "Moose Institute," to be centrally located somewhere in the Midwest, that would provide a home, schooling and vocational training to children of deceased Moose members.

The Birth of Mooseheart. After careful consideration of numerous sites, the Moose Supreme Council in late 1912 approved the purchase of what was known as the Brookline Farm—more than 1,000 acres along the then-dirt-surfaced Lincoln Highway, between Batavia and Aurora on the west side of the Fox River, about 40 miles west of Chicago. Ohio Congressman John Lentz, a member of the Supreme Council, conceived the name "Mooseheart" for the new community: "This," he said, "will always be the place where the Moose fraternity will collectively pour out its heart; its devotion and sustenance, to the children of its members in need."

So it was on a hot summer Sunday, July 27, 1913, that several thousand Moose men and women (for the Women of the Moose received formal recognition that year as the organization's official female component) gathered under a rented circus tent toward the south end of the new property, and ceremonially placed the cornerstone for Mooseheart. The first 11 youngsters in residence were present, having been admitted earlier that month; they and a handful of workers were housed in the original farmhouse and a few rough-hewn frame buildings that had been erected that spring.

Addressing Need on the Other End of Life: Moosehaven. Mooseheart's construction proceeded furiously over the next decade, but it only barely kept pace with admissions that swelled the student census to nearly 1,000 by 1920. *(Mooseheart's population would reach a peak of 1,300 during the depths of the Great Depression; housing was often "barracks" style—unacceptable by today's standards. Mooseheart officials now consider the campus' ultimate capacity at between 400 and 500.)*

Still, by the beginning of the Twenties, Davis and his Moose colleagues thought that the fraternity could and should do more—this time for aged members who were having trouble making ends meet in retirement. A limited number of elderly members had been invited to live amid the children at Mooseheart since 1915, but within a few years it was realized that this was not a practical long-term solution.

After another round of site consideration, 26 acres of riverside property was purchased just south of Jacksonville, Florida, and in the fall of 1922, Moosehaven, the "City of Contentment," was opened, with the arrival of its first 22 retired Moose residents. Moosehaven has since grown into a 63-acre community, providing comfortable housing, a wide array of recreational activities, and comprehensive health care to more than 400 residents.

Meanwhile, as the Moose fraternity was growing in visibility and influence, so was Jim Davis. President Warren G. Harding named him to his Cabinet as Secretary of Labor in 1921, and Davis continued in that post under Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert

Hoover as well. In November 1930, Davis, a Republican, won election to the U.S. Senate from Pennsylvania, and he served there with distinction for the next 14 years. As both Labor Secretary and U.S. Senator, Davis was known as a conservative champion of labor, who fought hard for the bargaining rights of unions—but who felt that the workingman should expect no "handouts" of any sort. In the Senate, it was Davis who spearheaded passage of landmark legislation to force building contractors to pay laborers "prevailing" union-level wages in any government construction work. The law would forever bear his name: The Davis-Bacon Act.

An Independent, Autonomous Women's Component. Though the Women of the Moose (originally termed the Women of Mooseheart Legion) had received formal recognition as a Moose auxiliary in 1913, they at first had little structured program of their own beyond the Chapter level. That changed in 1921, when Davis met and hired a remarkable woman named Katherine Smith.

When the 19th Amendment had granted women the right to vote in 1920, Smith, from Indianapolis, reasoned that women in politics would be a "growth market." She quit her secretarial job to go to work in Warren Harding's successful Presidential campaign—and, still in her 20s, was rewarded with an appointment as Director of Public Employment in Washington. In that post, her boss was Secretary of Labor James J. Davis.

Davis immediately recognized Smith's talent and drive, but it took him five years to convince her to quit her government job and go to work for him running the Women of the Moose. A stereotypical "women's program" held no interest for her, Smith protested. "So get out there and make a program," Davis retorted. She did exactly that, as the organization's first Grand Chancellor, for the next 38 years until her retirement in 1964, at which point the Women of the Moose boasted 250,000 members. (It has since grown to more than 540,000, in approximately 1,800 Chapters.)

As Davis committed more time and energy to his Washington duties in the 1920s and beyond, he had less time to run the Moose fraternity. In 1927 the day-to-day

management of the Order's business was assumed at Mooseheart by Malcolm R. Giles, in the office of Supreme Secretary. Giles, an accountant who had worked fulltime for the Moose since 1915, set out to implement a reorganization of the fraternity's finances, and in 1934 modernized its recruitment apparatus into a formal Membership Enrollment Department, under the direction of a gregarious and talented young man named Paul P. Schmitz.

Davis' health was uncertain as he left the Senate in early 1945, and he settled into an elder statesman's role with the Moose. He collapsed on the podium while addressing the Moose convention in August 1947, and died that November. Giles continued to run the organization's business as he had for 20 years; in 1949, the Supreme council granted him the title of Director General.

The "Proof of our Value:" Community Service. For a quarter-century the Moose had directed its efforts solely toward Mooseheart and Moosehaven; now, with postwar prosperity driving male Moose membership to nearly 800,000 members, Director General Giles set out to broaden the organization's horizons. In 1949 he conceived and instituted what was to become the third great Moose endeavor of the modern era, the Civic Affairs program (later renamed Community Service).

Giles explained his rationale thusly: "Only three institutions have a God-given right to exist in a community—the home, the church and the school. The rest of us must be valuable to the community to warrant our existence—and the burden of proof of our value is on us." The Community Service program has since flourished into a myriad of humanitarian efforts on the local Lodge level, as well as fraternity-wide projects such as the Moose Youth Awareness Program, in which bright teenagers go into elementary schools, daycare centers and the like to communicate an anti-drug message to 4- to 9-year olds—as many as 100,000 every year.

Malcolm Giles' term as Director General was cut short when he suffered a heart attack and died, at age 59, in September 1953. He was replaced on an interim basis by J.

Jack Stoehr, the well-respected Director of the fraternity's most successful geographic region, which included Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. For a permanent successor, the Order turned to the commanding presence of Schmitz, the Membership Director who in 19 years had nurtured the fraternity from a low of 240,000 members during the worst of the Great Depression, to nearly 900,000 by the early 1950s.

Schmitz, an Aurora, Illinois, native, led the Moose for nearly 21 years, longer than anyone except Davis. During the tenure, both the Mooseheart and Moosehaven physical plants received substantial modernization, and he guided the Moose smoothly through the tumultuous 1960s into the 1970s with continued steady membership growth, to more than 1 million men (in more than 2,000 Lodges) and 300,000 women before he retired in April 1974.

Schmitz turned over the Director General's office to Herbert W. Heilman—the first time a Mooseheart graduate (Class of 1934) had risen to lead the organization that had raised him at its Child City. Heilman, a teacher and athletic coach originally from Tiffin, Ohio, had been hired by Giles in 1948 to run the fraternity's sports program, then had worked for 17 years as Membership Enrollment Director under Schmitz. Heilman's tenure saw men's and women's combined Moose membership rise to nearly 1.8 million before his retirement in January 1984

When Paul J. O'Hollaren, a lawyer and insurance executive from Portland, Oregon, became the Supreme Council's choice to succeed Heilman, it was the first time since Davis that a non-employee had assumed the Director General's chair. O'Hollaren had, of course, been a active Moose for a quarter-century: charter Governor of his Lodge in 1958, President of the Oregon Moose Association, Chief Justice of the Supreme Forum, and, in 1978-79, Supreme Governor.

Director General O'Hollaren's whirlwind decade in office saw a full computerization and modernization of the fraternity's business operations; the change of its corporate name to Moose International; the stirring observances of the organization's Centennial in

1988, a completely updated redesign of the fraternity's ceremonial degree regalia (away from headgear and robes to distinctive color-coded blazers and neckties); a rebuilding of Mooseheart's utilities infrastructure, and the start of a long-range construction program to completely renovate or build new residential space for every Mooseheart student and Moosehaven resident.

O'Hollaren retired in February 1994; his successor, Director General Frank A. Sarnecki, also came to chief executive post out of the Moose "volunteer corps." Sarnecki, a real estate and insurance executive from New Jersey, served as Secretary of the Perth Amboy Lodge for 12 years in the 1960s and '70s; he rose to become Supreme Governor in 1988-89. During his five years in office, Sarnecki guided the fraternity toward sweeping changes – a fully equitable relationship between its men's and women's components in admissions to Moosehaven and in Lodge facilities that have been re-dubbed "Moose Family Centers"; a fraternity-wide effort to fund a new $16 million LifeCare Complex at Moosehaven; and, an expansion of Mooseheart admissions to accept applications from all children in need—a move that inspired renowned ABC Radio commentator Paul Harvey to refer to efforts of the Moose Family Fraternity, in an August 1994 broadcast to his 24 million listeners throughout North America, as "a dynamic demonstration of civilized man's better self."

In April 1999, Frank Sarnecki resigned as Director General to pursue business interests back home on the east coast; after a period of weeks in which Paul O'Hollaren returned to run Moose International operations on an interim basis, longtime Supreme Secretary Donald Ross was elevated by the Supreme Council to become the fraternity's eighth Director General on June 15, 1999. Although Ross was a 28-year career Moose staff officer at the time of his appointment, he also was, at age 49, the organization's youngest chief executive in more than 75 years.