



the caltech
Gnome Club



*a visual
perspective*





EARLY YEARS 1897-1919



“A Literary Society, The Gnome Club, is maintained by the students with the co-operation of the Faculty and is doing good work. It affords an opportunity for training in debating, essay writing, declamation, extempore speaking, parliamentary practice etc.”

Throop Polytechnic Report, 1897



THE GNOMES OF GNINETY-SEVEN



1. F.B. Jewett
2. Albert Mercer
3. R.B. Blackman
4. J.E. Turner
5. H. Gaylord
6. J. Gaylord
7. Arthur Chamberlain
8. Walter A. Edwards (Pres. TPI)
9. Oliver Gale
10. James C. Creamer (Founder)
11. Joseph Grinnell
12. R. Sterrett
13. Unidentified
14. H. Young
15. Lucien Gilmore (Prof.)
16. R. Ford (Prof.)

The first image of the Gnome Club. The founding members were photographed in the library, Old East Hall, Throop Polytechnic Institute, in 1897.



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GNOMES FORGE AHEAD



**Gnome Club House
351 South Euclid Ave.**



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GNOME CARPOOLING



Gnomes visit Redlands for the annual football game, ca 1915.



GNOME PASTIMES



Each year Gnomes retreated to the seaside for some R&R. Among those enjoying the spring air in 1917 is Frank Capra (far right in middle photo, far left in lower photo).



C A P R A



Frank Capra's letter to James A. B. Scherer of November 1917 reveals the Gnome's doubts about a scientific career: "For the last couple years I have been deceiving myself and others into believing that I would make a good engineer or chemist. I have come to think differently now, and ... I believe the things that I'm temperamentally fit for are music, drama, or dealing with humans such as is offered by diplomatic service ..."



GNOME HEYDAY 1920-34



MADISON AVENUE DIGS

“At a business session, President Combs presiding, our Treasurer reported that the light bill was getting out of hand and that we should start studying more by daylight and turn the lights off earlier. Frank Wiegand responded: ‘Keep on studying at night, fellows, I’ll take care of the light bill.’ We didn’t realize, and Frank forgot, that he had reversed the wires at the light meter. Within a few weeks a city investigator discovered the trick, and arrived at the house after their records showed that the city owed the Gnome Club money.”

- ***Henry Gunning '27***



Gnome House, 289 South Madison Ave.



GNOME DIVERSIONS



Cards and gaming were always popular. In the 1920s, chess was banned from Gnome House because it was affecting student grades.



“A part of the initiation was to sit on a cake of ice with a bare butt. You had to sit there until you could tell a funny story which made the members laugh. When you got up a sharp paddle didn’t hurt because you were frozen numb, but when you thawed out—holy gee, it would sting.”

• *Mike O’Haver ’29*

HAZING GNEW GNOMES

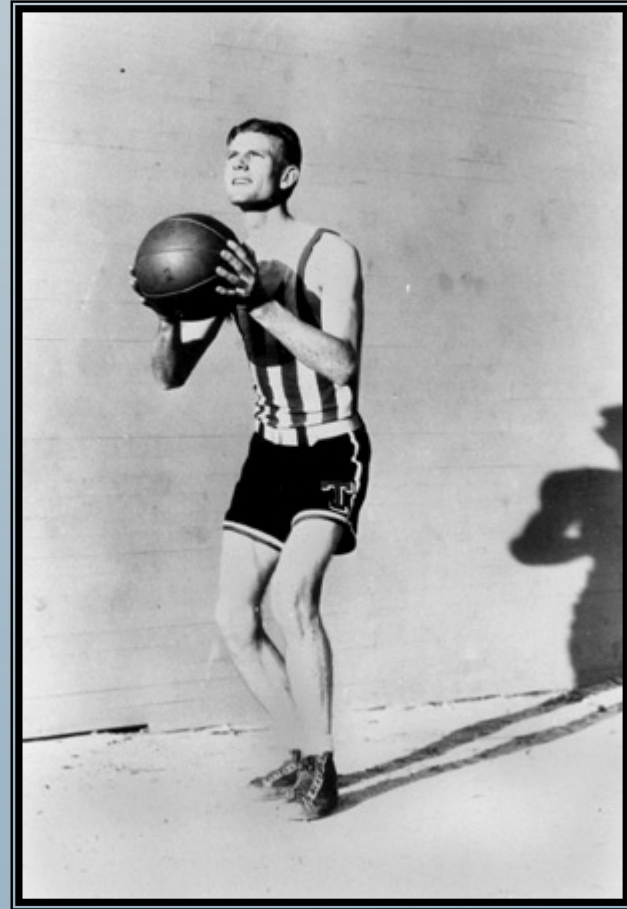




GNOMES: ATHLETIC BEAVERS



Mike O'Haver in one of his many Beaver uniforms, ca 1928.



Ray Labory eyes the hoop, ca 1928.



GLENN GRAHAM: OLYMPIC MEDALIST

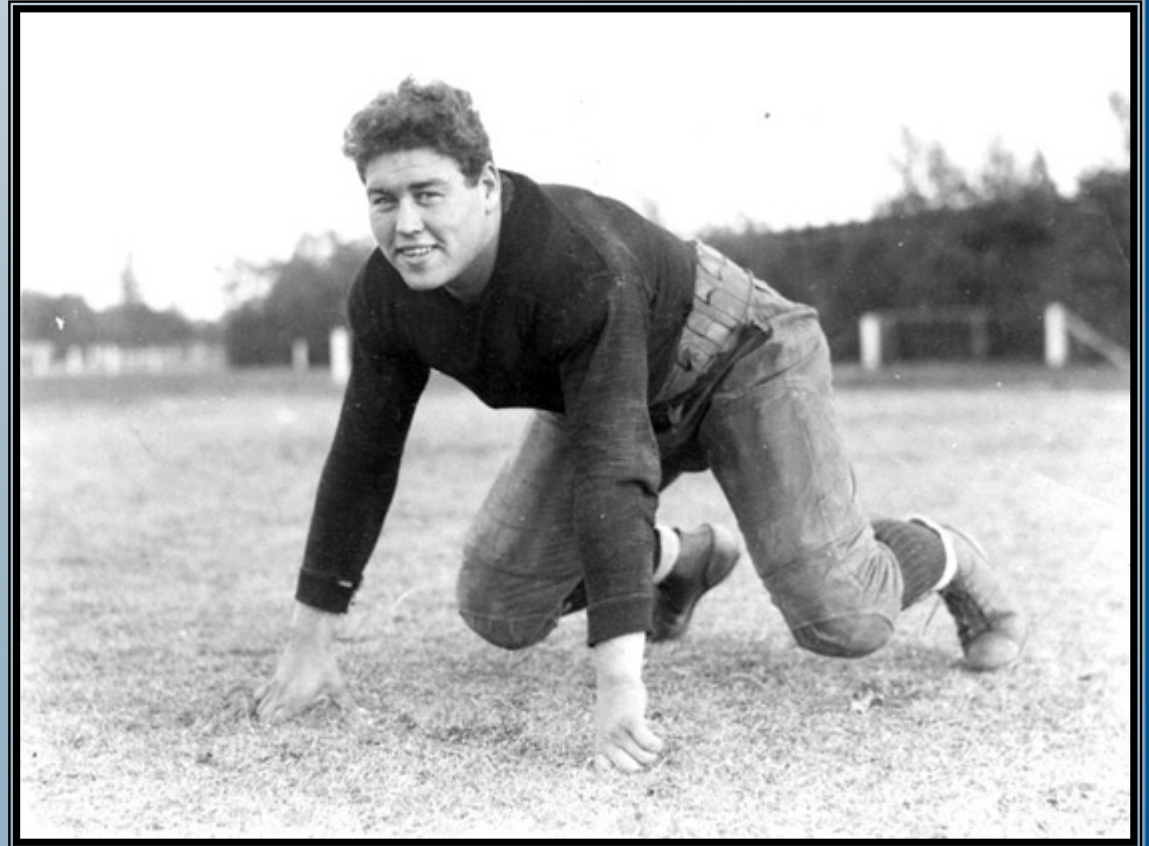
“Glenn was fresh from the 1924 Olympics in Paris, where he represented the United States in the pole vault. He and Lee Barnes of USC were the only ones to clear 13 feet. The bar was raised and neither of them could clear the next height, so they started to lower the bar. Finally, Lee cleared 12 feet, but Glen couldn’t make it so the Gold went to Lee and Glen had to settle for the Silver. What a thrill it was for a new frosh Gnome pledge to room with famous Glenn Graham!”

• *Guy Chilberg, '28*

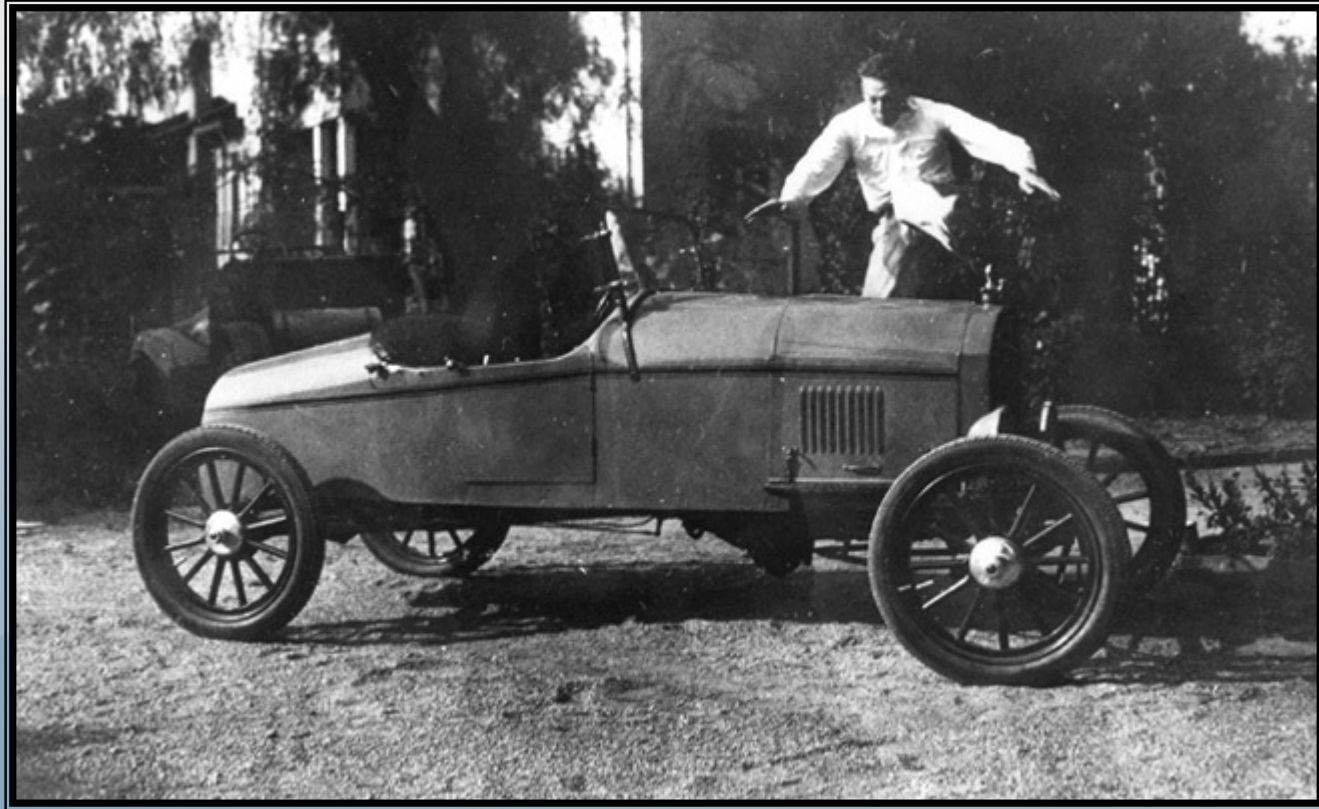


“During initiation we were required to crawl through a storm drain starting on San Pasqual and ending on the south side of California Street. The last section, under California Street, was very narrow, and Fat Lewis got stuck, and we had to go down and push and shove him so that he could back out. Cramer got smart and went only part way, then backed out. This was no good, as the gang was waiting for him and made him crawl through again until he reached the end at California Street.”

• *Mike O’ Haver, ’29*



CHARLES F. “FAT” LEWIS, ’28



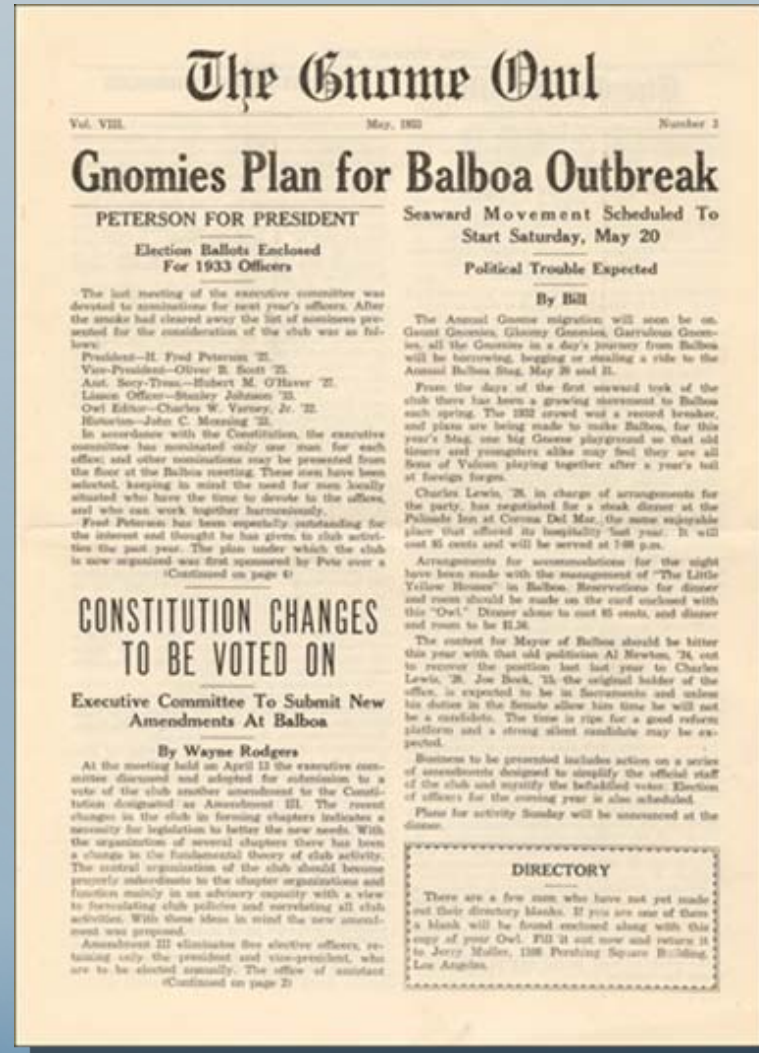
“I had a Model T Ford chassis with a custom speedster body. Noticing the low profile, Bob Heilbron and Ted Combs bet that they could jump over it. Ted succeeded but Bob seemed to lose altitude in mid-flight and made a highly visible ‘sitzmark’ in the middle of the hood. I had to live with it for some time.”

• *Henry Gunning '25*



Winners of the boat race at Military Camp in Monterey, 1928. The oarsmen are Mike O'Haver, Crane Berry, Guy Chilberg, Douglas Kingman, and Robert Ross.

The Club's publication, *The Gnome Owl*. 1933.



The Gnome Owl

Vol. VIII

May, 1933

Number 3

Gnomies Plan for Balboa Outbreak

PETERSON FOR PRESIDENT

Seaward Movement Scheduled to Start Saturday, May 20

Election Ballots Enclosed For 1933 Officers

Political Trouble Expected

By Bill

The last meeting of the executive committee was devoted to nominations for next year's officers. After the smoke had cleared away the list of nominees presented for the consideration of the club was as follows:

President—H. Fred Peterson '28.
Vice-President—Oliver B. Scott '28.
Asst. Secy.—Tracy—Robert M. O'Haver '28.
Liaison Officer—Stanley Johnson '28.
Owl Editor—Charles W. Varney, Jr. '22.
Reporter—John C. Messing '28.

In accordance with the Constitution, the executive committee has nominated only one man for each office, and other nominations may be presented from the floor at the Balboa meeting. These men have been selected, keeping in mind the need for men locally situated who have the time to devote to the office, and who can work together harmoniously.

Fred Peterson has been especially outstanding for the interest and thought he has given to club activities the past year. The plan under which the club is now organized was first sponsored by Pete over a

(Continued on page 4)

The Annual Gnome migration will soon be on. Grand Gnomies, Glimmy Gnomies, Garrulous Gnomies, all the Gnomies in a day's journey from Balboa will be hurrowing, begging or stalling a ride to the Annual Balboa Stag, May 26 and 27.

From the days of the first seaward trek of the club there has been a growing movement to Balboa each spring. The 1932 crowd was a record breaker, and plans are being made to make Balboa, for this year's Stag, one big Gnome playground so that old timers and youngsters alike may feel they are all fans of Yulon playing together after a year's toil at foreign larks.

Charles Lewis, '28, in charge of arrangements for the party, has registered for a steak dinner at the Palisade Inn at Corona Del Mar, the more enjoyable place that offered its hospitality last year. It will cost \$5 cents and will be served at 7:00 p.m.

Arrangements for accommodations for the night have been made with the management of "The Little Yellow House" in Balboa. Reservations for dinner and rooms should be made on the card enclosed with this "Owl." Dinner alone to cost \$5 cents, and dinner and room to be \$1.25.

The contest for Mayor of Balboa should be bitter this year with that old politician Al Newton, '28, out to recover the position last year to Charles Lewis, '28. Joe Book, '28, the original holder of the office, is expected to be in Sacramento and unless his duties in the Senate allow him time he will not be a candidate. The time is ripe for a good reform platform and a strong silent candidate may be expected.

Business to be presented includes action on a series of amendments designed to simplify the official staff of the club and clarify the befuddled duties. Election of officers for the coming year is also scheduled.

Plans for activity Sunday will be announced at the dinner.

DIRECTORY

There are a few men who have not yet made out their directory blanks. If you are one of them a blank will be found enclosed along with this copy of your Owl. Fill it out now and return it to Jerry Miller, 1308 Pershing Square Building, Los Angeles.

CONSTITUTION CHANGES TO BE VOTED ON

Executive Committee To Submit New Amendments At Balboa

By Wayne Rodgers

At the meeting held on April 12 the executive committee discussed and adopted for submission to a vote of the club another amendment to the Constitution designated as Amendment III. The recent changes in the club in forming chapters indicates a necessity for legislation to better the new needs. With the organization of several chapters there has been a change in the fundamental theory of club activity. The central organization of the club should become merely subsidiaries to the chapter organizations and function mainly in an advisory capacity with a view to formulating club policies and supervising all club activities. With these ideas in mind the new amendment was proposed.

Amendment III eliminates five elective offices, retaining only the president and vice-president, who are to be elected annually. The office of assistant

(Continued on page 2)



THE OWL AS PHOENIX: GNOME REVIVAL



Gnomes from the club's hey-day, such as those from 1931, ensured that the club survived and, eventually, flourished. The Gnomes are pictured on their Madison Avenue porch in 1931 and half a century later at their 50th reunion in 1981.



**Front row: Howard Smits, Horace Gilbert, Robert Smith, Robert Oaks, George Liedholm.
Back row: Ray Labory, Rea Axline, Tom Crawford, Leland Pratt, John McMillan, George Rice, Robert Lehman.**



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CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Pasadena, California 91125

Thomas E. Everhart
President

(818) 356-6301

December 7, 1987

Mr. Theodore C. Combs
1500 Circle Drive
San Marino, California 91108

Dear Mr. ^{Ted} Combs:

I want to thank you personally for being such a great supporter of Caltech. Your continued Alumni Fund contribution and your current generous gift to the Gnome Scholarship Fund are appreciated. I am particularly impressed by your contribution of time in your editing of the Gnome Club History.

When I first arrived at the Institute, I realized that alumni play a key role in making Caltech a special place. You are proof that this is true.

Caltech is grateful for the fine tradition of support that is associated with the Gnome Club, and we look forward to adding to the long list of Gnome Scholars. Let me also assure you that a portion of your gift will be matched by our Alumni Fund Challenge.

Thank you again for your recent gift. Your encouragement of this special project is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Everhart

TEE:mcp

Ref - It is indeed gratifying to know that D. Everhart holds the Gnome Club in high regard. He should become a member.
Ted

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In this December 1987 letter to Ted Combs, Thomas Everhart acknowledged the tremendous support that Gnomes have given the institute.



FOUNDER'S NIGHTS



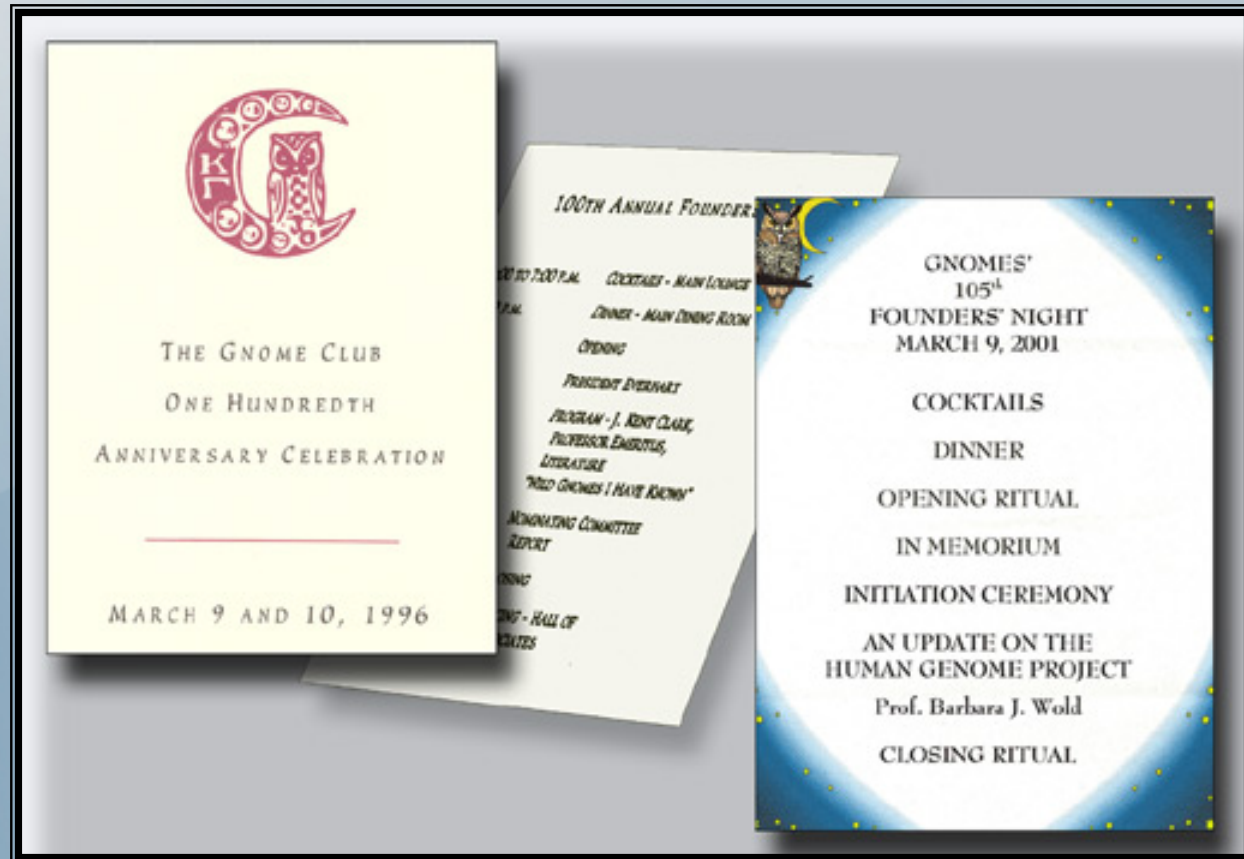
Above: gnew and not-so-gnew Gnomes enjoy Founder's Night in 1998. Below: a trio of Hendersons—Lisa ('86), L.P. ('25) and Lee ("Moose", '54)—join Rolf Hastrup at the podium in 1987.



Along with Oliver H. Gardner ('51; pres. 1975-76), an ebullient Ray Bradbury (left) takes the podium at the Gnome's 1976 Feast.



A CENTURY DOWN & A NEW MILLENNIUM



Club members witnessed some remarkable changes at Throop and Caltech during their first century, and will certainly do the same during this new millennium.



FELLOWS

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GOOD FELLOWS ALL
(Gnome Club Song)

Words and Music by
FRANK H. WIEGAND
1927

Good fel-lows all who gath-er here, Kap-pa Gam-ma are we,

Friend-ships we made by the fire-side's glow, Em-blems of loy-al-ty, The

Owl sits on high on the cres-cent moon, Si-lent and wise is he,

Hail to the spir-it of broth-er-hood, Gnom-e fra-ter-ni-ty.

The club song, composed by Frank Wiegand in 1927.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- **The Caltech Archives is indebted to the Gnome Club for financial assistance that has made this and other projects possible.**
- **Photographs and other images for this presentation were drawn from the Historical Files and the Gnome Club Papers in the Institute Archives. The letter of Frank Capra is from the Papers of James A.B. Scherer. Further information about particular images can be sought by contacting the Institute Archives**
- **Quoted text was extracted from Theodore C. Combs (ed.), *The Gnome Club, Throop & Caltech: a History* (1986).**

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Exhibit designed by Kevin C. Knox