



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

A CENTURY OF MEMORIES

A supplement of *Minnesota* magazine

# A CENTURY OF MEMORIES

## A C E N T U R Y O F M E M O R I E S

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## A CENTURY OF MEMORIES

### *Drama, Courage, Spirit, and Intelligence*



When we decided last year to research, write and publish a history of the University of Minnesota Alumni Association for our 100th anniversary, we quickly realized what a monumental task we'd begun. Put simply, there has been a lot of history

made through the years in this organization, and fitting that story into 36 pages was a daunting prospect.

Our past was collected in more than 80 boxes of correspondence, memorabilia and folders stored at the University Archives in the Elmer L. Andersen Library. It was also found in numerous, overfilled file cabinets at the McNamara Alumni Center. The minutes of the annual meetings, board meetings, and executive committee were enormously helpful guides, and preserved in bound volumes that measure higher than a pile of metropolitan phonebooks. The history has also been chronicled on a weekly and monthly basis for more than 100 years in issues of the alumni magazine. The collection of these journals now fills a good-size bookcase from top to bottom.

Perhaps most importantly, the history is contained in the memories and recollections of the thousands of volunteers who have been the heart and soul of the UMAA through its 100 years. We tried to collect a representative sample of these voices by interviewing a number of past presidents and other volunteer leaders. We regret that we didn't have time to talk with more, or that we couldn't collect the personal reminiscences of

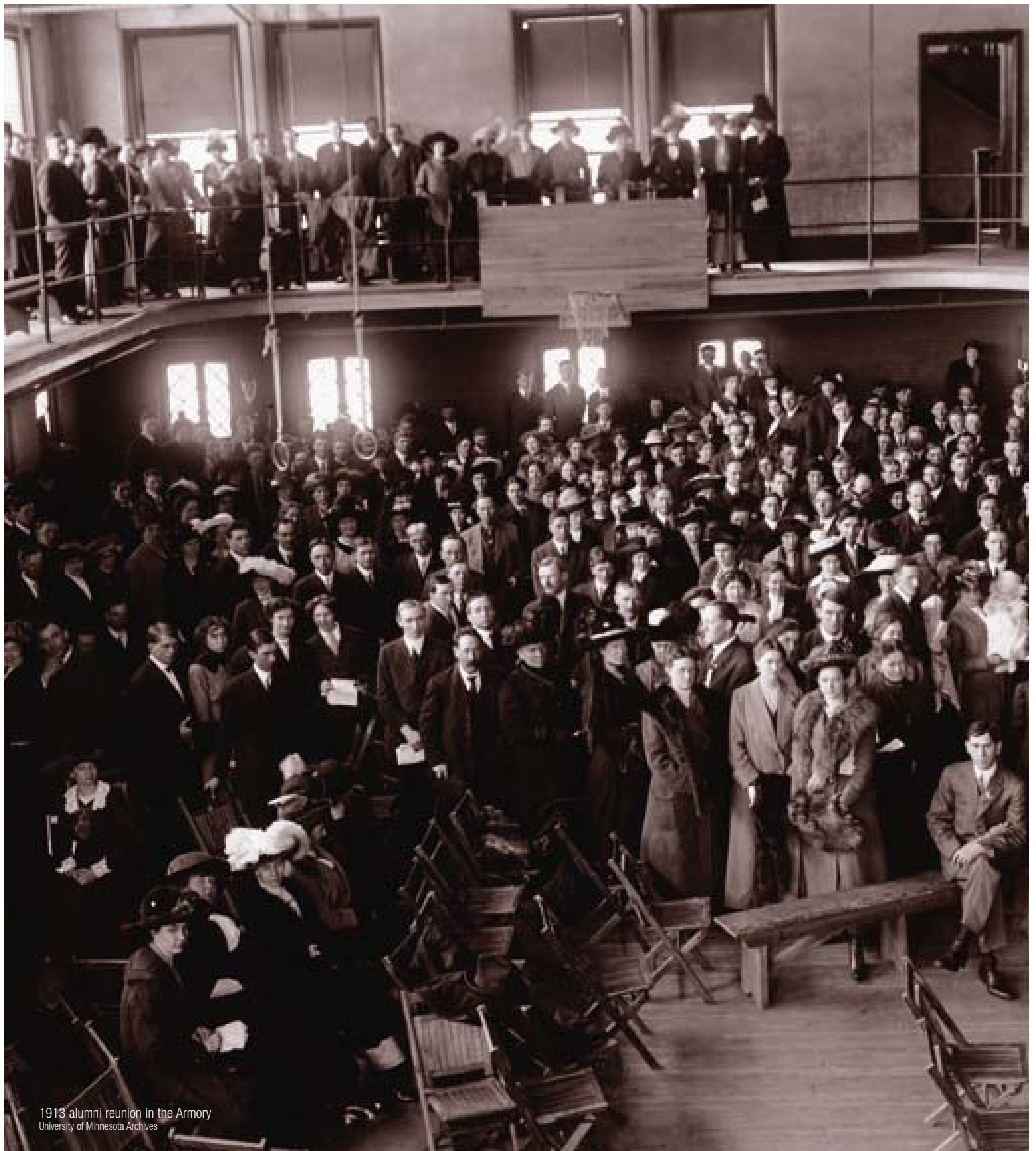
those thousands of dedicated volunteers who worked so hard for the association in times past.

As difficult as it was to condense all of this wonderful material into the pages that follow, we were encouraged by the fact that, with a history as rich as the UMAA's, we could hardly go wrong. From the banging of the gavel at the first alumni gathering, way back in January 1904, right up to the present, the story of this association has been as rich and colorful as any organization like it in the country. In the following pages, you'll find drama, courage, spirit and intelligence. You'll find triumphs in the face of adversity, and compelling portraits of dedication, innovation and perseverance. You'll read the story of an organization that has remained devoted to the University of Minnesota for all of its years; one that has been unafraid of advocating on behalf of the U of M. At the same time, the UMAA has been forthright in giving voice to the thoughtful and independent opinions of the University's alumni, and fearless in dealing with any conflicts that arise as a consequence.

Our fondest hope for this history has always been that the memories and traditions detailed here will serve as an inspiration and a guidepost for future generations of volunteers and members of the University of Minnesota Alumni Association. We have had an exciting and eventful 100 years. I'm confident that the next 100 years will be equally fulfilling.

*Margaret D. Carlson*

Margaret Sughrue Carlson, Ph.D. (1983)  
Executive Director



1913 alumni reunion in the Armory  
University of Minnesota Archives

## 1904

The General Alumni Association (GAA) was founded on January 30 when 350 alumni and faculty met in the University's Armory to approve a constitution for an organization that would "weld graduates into a single unit of influence."

## 1905

E.B. Johnson (1888), former registrar of the University and owner, editor, and publisher of *The Minnesota Alumni Weekly*, was hired as the first alumni secretary. Two years later he turned over the ownership of *The Weekly* to the association.

## 1907

The thrust of the annual meeting discussion was the need for more alumni to become interested in public affairs, to run for the legislature in order that "the University might claim more sympathetic treatment."

## 1908

The alumni board passed a resolution in favor of legislation that would ensure that the majority of appointed members to the Board of Regents be graduates of the University of 10 years or more.

## CHAPTER ONE

# *An Advocate for the University*

### *The Founding*

On January 30, 1904, more than 350 alumni gathered in the Armory on the campus of the University of Minnesota to constitute the founding and first meeting of the General Alumni Association (GAA). Only 250 guests had been expected, and 300 places had been set at banquet tables arranged around the hall, which meant that at least 50 of the founding members “were compelled to wait to be served until after the first lot had [finished its meal].”

No matter. The Armory, grim, medieval structure that it was, had been all dressed up for a gala. Orange and black decorations, done in a Japanese theme and held over from a junior dance staged in the building the evening before, festooned the hall. A group of alumni led the assembly in favorite college songs, and there was speechmaking from some of the luminaries of the newly formed association, all intended to make the evening “a hummer,” in the words of the journal of University alumni, *The Minnesota Alumni Weekly*. Speakers included Professor Henry Nachtrieb (1882), who would soon be elected president of the new organization; the Honorable Fred Snyder (1881), a state legislator and future University regent; and Cyrus Northrop, president of the University of Minnesota.

Most of those at the gathering felt that the formation of a General Alumni Association was overdue at the University. Across the nation, college and university alumni were banding together either to form associations or revitalize existing groups. The growth of higher education in the last years of the 19th century had begun the process of making great institutions of small colleges. As a result, universities like Minnesota were drawing ever-larger portions of state budgets and, as a consequence, their doings were being scrutinized more closely by political friends and foes alike. Alumni associations were viewed as a means to advance the public interests of these schools by their graduates.

At the same time, a growing spirit of affinity for alma mater was sweeping campuses around the

country. Spurred by the advent and growth of intercollegiate athletics, particularly football, university alumni found themselves banding together on a weekly basis each fall to cheer on a team that symbolized not just their education, but their youth and dreams as well. With the goal line in sight, it was suddenly much easier to find common cause with fellow alumni, which made for a far shorter step to the creation of an association.

### *Central Organization Lacking*

There had been active alumni groups at the University of Minnesota prior to 1904. Individual colleges – agriculture, law, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry – had them for a number of years but an effective central organization had been lacking.

In the late 1870s, what was known as the Alumni Association had been formed at the U, but it functioned more like a club than a representative organization. This group met annually, around commencement time, and had officers that included an orator, toastmaster, poet, and historian. Despite the conviviality suggested by these titles, this early association was occasionally animated by serious problems, most dealing with the University’s president at the time, William Folwell, whom many in the group felt was mismanaging the school. Enrollment had dipped from Folwell’s early years at the University to the early 1880s. There were discipline problems as well. “Students lose their respect for the President as they advance from year to year,” read one criticism. “[Folwell] allowed personal feelings to influence his decisions” and “students found it impossible to depend upon his word.”

But there was a sense of pettiness and overkill in the Alumni Association’s criticism of the president, which had the effect of negating its impact with the Board of Regents. Subsequent Alumni Association boards were even less effective and the group had lost most of what influence it had by the 1890s, when it became not so much an organization as a committee.

#### 1910

President Cyrus Northrop’s commencement address acknowledged alumni: “I believe that our graduates are as useful, as devoted to the right, as earnest to promote the best interest of the state and nation as the graduates of any university in the land.”

#### 1914

The number of living alumni totaled 10,000; lifetime GAA members numbered 1,755. The GAA endowment campaign raised \$15,000 by securing 1,000 new members.

#### 1916

Lifetime membership fees increased to \$15 for graduates out of school five years or less and \$20 for those out of school five years or more; a subscription to *The Weekly* was included.

#### 1919

The board took up the issue of the GAA’s physical presence on campus: “The question was raised as to whether the board thought it best to ask that the association be assigned offices in the proposed new administration building.”



A portion of the minutes of a June 2, 1898, meeting gives a sense of the state of affairs: "Mr. W.F. Webster as chairman of the alumni committee on University affairs reported that it seemed best not to report all the committee had attempted to do during the year as many things were not completed and silence as yet seemed best under the circumstances."

### *Battling the Board of Control*

There had been calls for a new, more vital organization for some time before the January 1904 banquet. *The Weekly* had been lobbying for the formation of an alumni association since it first began publishing in the fall of 1901; and the next summer, a committee of alumni faculty members had drafted a constitution for an alumni organization. It was this same document, with minor changes, that was ratified that January night. But what really spurred the creation of the organization and caused the overflow crowd at the Armory was a state agency called the Board of Control.

"It is both the sentiment and opinion of this association that the management of the finances of the University should never have been placed under a state board of control," thundered the first resolution ever enacted by the organization, "that it should be removed therefrom; and this association hereby pledges itself to use its best efforts to bring about such removal at the earliest possible moment and to fully restore the management of the Board of Regents."

The Board of Control had been instituted as a fiscal watchdog agency by the state legislature in 1901. It was headed by the state auditor and was intended to count the nickels and dimes expended by "the charitable, reformatory, and penal institutions" of the state. Sometime between the passage of the legislation and the creation of the General Alumni Association, the University of Minnesota fell under the purview of the Board of Control, which put a remarkably tight rein on its spending. Disbursements from the largest

building contracts to the smallest supply item in the academic budget had to be funneled through the board. This meant distinguished professors like Henry Nachtrieb, who chaired the University's Animal Biology Department and was zoologist for the Minnesota State Geological and Natural History Survey, spent an inordinate amount of time exchanging letters with purchasing agents employed by the Board of Control. The matters were at times astonishingly trivial.

"The 'Toilet Soap' sent by G.S. Bracket Co. none of us consider up to the specification that calls for 'good toilet soap,'" wrote Nachtrieb to a Board of Control purchasing agent. "Not having designated any special brand I suppose we shall have to accept the order of the Board. If we had purchased the soap for the department there would be something different here for the boys and girls to use." And elsewhere in the same letter: "The bill herewith sent you from my assistant Hal Downey was incurred without your approval thru [sic] my mistake. We needed the knives sharpened at once and upon the spur of the moment I ordered Mr. Downey to get the work done. . . . I shall take care not [to] violate the regulations of the Board in the future."

To help alleviate matters, a suit was brought against the state and this piece of legislation by friends of the University, who were seriously concerned about the ramifications of a governmental agency, other than the Board of Regents, having

direct control over the doings of the school. But the Supreme Court of the state of Minnesota ruled that the University, not unlike the Minnesota Academy for the Blind in Faribault and the Owatonna Minnesota Orphan's Home, was actually a charitable institution and therefore did fall under the strictures of the law.

Though many legislators saw the folly of their own work, there were not enough votes to fix the mess. By January 30, 1904, it was obvious to members of the University community and its alumni that the only way to overturn the governance of the Board of Control was through political advocacy. An organized and activated alumni association was thought to be an



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ideal vessel to advance the causes of the University within the state and its legislature.

Even so, a brief note of caution could be heard at the outset of Henry Nachtrieb's opening speech to the gathering. "We are not a political organization," he said, "but if it becomes necessary for us to go into politics to keep the University *out* of politics, we shall go *into* politics."

Another alumnus from the state legislature, Arthur Helliwell (1895), exhorted the new organization: "Organized we may become a power. Systematized we may carry everything before us. We are to blame if we don't get what we want." But President Cyrus Northrop cautioned the assembly, "not to do what you dream before breakfast. Eat your breakfast in peace and then later in the day you can look at things with calmer judgment."

### *Working on a Full Stomach*

All of these points were well understood by those attending the meeting. To be an effective organization, one that would last for the next 100 years, the new alumni association needed to be organized and systematized. It needed to advocate for the college in the political arena when necessary. It needed to always stand by the University and cherish it. But it also needed sober judgment and consideration. To paraphrase Northrop, the alumni association needed to work on a full, rather than an empty, stomach.

The constitution of the organization, as ratified by the January assembly, offered a forthright beginning. The first article states that the primary object of the association was to be "the promotion of the welfare of the University of Minnesota through the stimulation of the interest therein of all graduate and non-graduate matriculates of all colleges [at the University]." The alumni association was charged with keeping graduates in touch with "the doings of their Alma Mater" and helping to cultivate in these alumni "a fraternal spirit."

The alumni association was to keep a list of all graduates and matriculates of the University (they numbered about 5,000 in 1904). It was to collect annual dues of 50 cents, or a lifetime membership of \$10. A board of directors was to be instituted by the new association with officers consisting of a president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer.

All of this bookkeeping and list making was of vital importance to the newfound organization. Once the passions of the night had cooled and the crowd had gone home, the true test of the new association was not whether it would have an immediate impact on the state and its Board of Control, it was whether it could be summoned again to the cause and who else might help.

The meeting adjourned soon after President Northrop's speech. All in all, the gala was a resounding success. According to *The Weekly*, it was "an occasion which will long be remembered by those present. . . . Every speech reached a high watermark, and every speaker spoke right out from the heart, as though in a family gathering, which was the case."

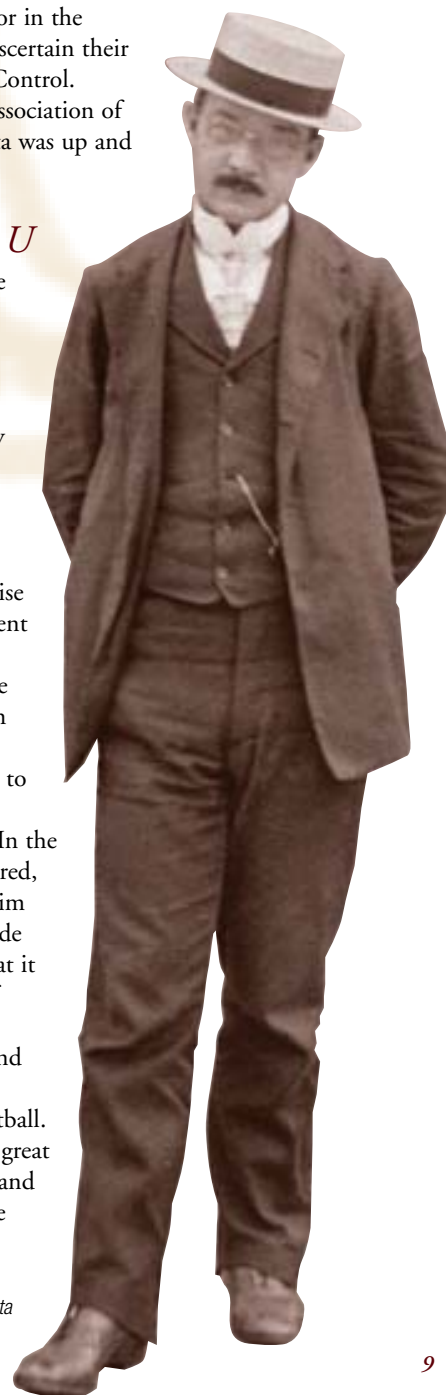
A week later the alumni board of directors met for the first time. Officers were elected, including: Nachtrieb as president; Dr. Louis B. Wilson (1896) of the College of Medicine and Surgery as vice president; and Charles Keyes (1896, '99) of the College of Law as secretary-treasurer. Keyes was given the assignment of collecting and maintaining a catalog of alumni. Nachtrieb was to write a letter to all candidates for state governor in the upcoming fall election to ascertain their opinions on the Board of Control.

The General Alumni Association of the University of Minnesota was up and running.

### *Advocating for the U*

One of the functions of the GAA as outlined in the constitution – keeping alumni apprised of the doings of the University – was already being served by *The Weekly* and its editor, E.B. Johnson (1888). Johnson, a former registrar at the U, had founded the journal as a private enterprise in the fall of 1901. His intent was to create a weekly magazine that would "make the alumni acquainted with what is going on at the University at all times, and to foster a genuine University spirit among the alumni." In the first edition, Johnson declared, "*The Weekly* has no other aim than to be a thoroughly wide awake newspaper." And that it was offering a potpourri of University news, alumni happenings, social notes, and sports reporting, with a particular emphasis on football.

*The Weekly* was never a great moneymaker for Johnson, and one of the early tasks of the GAA board was to provide



E.B. Johnson (1888), creator of *The Minnesota Alumni Weekly* and GAA secretary, 1906-20  
University of Minnesota Archives

stability to the journal and its editor. As a consequence, Johnson was hired for the position of secretary of the alumni association in 1906, at a salary of \$2,400 per annum. It was this post that would eventually evolve into the current position of executive director. A short time later, the ownership of *The Weekly* passed from Johnson to the GAA, though Johnson continued as its editor.

During Johnson's tenure and beyond, *The Weekly* remained "a wide awake" paper, continuing to advocate for the University on a variety of issues, including the Board of Control. This was a matter that hadn't gone away with the simple creation of the alumni association. In fact, if anything, the board clutched the purse strings even tighter in the year following its creation. *The Weekly* helped rally alumni to the cause once more in 1905 as a new legislature was seated and debating a law that would do away with the board. Just before the GAA's second annual meeting, another rouser at the Armory, *The Weekly* editorialized: "The Board of Control has kept the expenditures of the University within its income; but how? By simply not purchasing needed supplies. It has lived within its income just as a father of a family might keep within its income, when his children are crying for bread, by withholding bread which might be had for the asking."

A new governor, John Albert Johnson, was in the University's corner for this fight, which helped considerably in steering the Board of Control to its demise in the spring of that year; but the debate itself would do much to shape the role of the early alumni association. Founded as an advocate for the University, the GAA would prove itself unafraid of tackling political issues and lobbying for the U on a variety of matters – from budgets to regent selection to football stadiums – in the years to come.

A strong faculty representation on the alumni board – both Nachtrieb and Wilson were professors – helped secure, in 1908, a 30 percent salary raise for

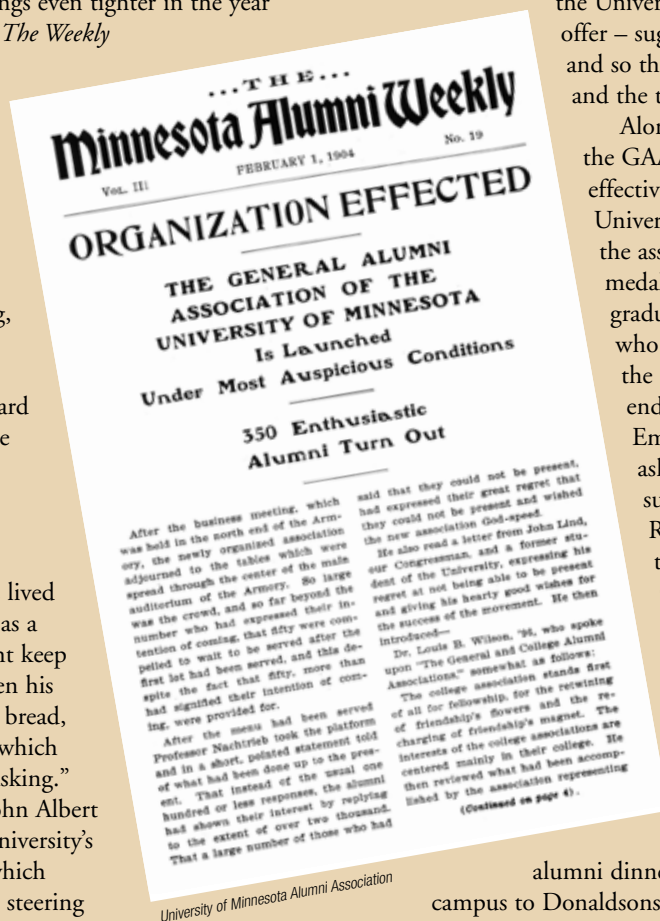
University teachers, who had been seriously underpaid by comparison with other state universities in the Midwest.

The association lobbied for campus expansion, including the removal of the Northern Pacific railroad tracks, which ran through the heart of the Minneapolis campus. It also tread into murkier waters, sometimes directly endorsing political candidates for the legislature, for instance, and jumping into a 1915 fray that involved a plan to link the University and the Mayo Clinic in a graduate school of medicine. One key issue for alumni was whether the University would be ceding academic prerogatives to Mayo by way of this alliance. The ultimate decision by the University – to accept the Mayo offer – suggested that it would not, and so the connection was made and the two entities flourished.

Along with its advocacy role, the GAA was proving itself an effective ambassador for the University. During World War I, the association created a service medal to be given to all graduates and undergraduates who served in the military. In the aftermath of "the war to end all wars," Professor Emeritus Maria Sanford asked the association for support for a University Relief Unit, sponsored by the Minnesota Alumnae Club, to help war victims in France. This group of University women had formed in 1914 to raise money for scholarships for female students.

The GAA knew lighter moments as well. The annual

alumni dinner had shifted from the campus to Donaldsons Tea Room by the fifth year of the event, and the functions remained gala occasions where business mixed easily with good cheer. Organizers took advantage of this fact in 1919 to play an elaborate hoax on attendees. They invited Charles Hughes, former Republican candidate for the U.S. presidency, who had been defeated by Woodrow Wilson three years before, to offer a few words to the assembly. Hughes was said to be traveling through the area to the West Coast. He graciously accepted the offer and proceeded to give a talk, which showed "a remarkable acquaintance with Minnesota affairs."



University of Minnesota Alumni Association



Except Hughes wasn't really Hughes. He was in fact a Minnesota congressman named Walter Newton (1905) made up to look like the former presidential candidate (and future Supreme Court justice). The joke fooled a reporter for *The Minnesota Daily*, who buttonholed Newton after the talk and proceeded to grill "the distinguished visitor" on his opinions of Wilson's plans for a League of Nations. The poor, young reporter wasn't the only guest to be punked. According to the minutes of the meeting, "A large portion of the alumni went home thinking they had heard Mr. Hughes."

## *A Growing Force*

Under the guidance of Henry Nachtrieb and E.B. Johnson, membership in the GAA grew and its administration thrived. With the help of funds from the Board of Regents, an alumni directory was published in the pages of *The Weekly* in 1908, and a history of the U written by Johnson, *Forty Years of the University of Minnesota*, was published three years later. By 1914, of 10,000 living alumni, 1,750 were members of the alumni association. That year, \$15,000 was raised in an endowment campaign that brought in 1,000 new members.

Women had an active role in the GAA from its earliest years. Gratia Countryman (1889), who headed the Minneapolis Public Library and was one of the leading advocates for women's rights in the city, served on the association's board of directors in 1912-13, and again in 1923. In 1910, Clara Thomas (1900) was asked to address the annual meeting on women's suffrage and to give "a woman's point of view." According to the minutes of the meeting, she provided "hard sense and gave some mighty good advice." Thomas would serve on the alumni board in the 1910s, along with Effie Ames Rochford (1892) and Jean Muir Dorsey (1913).

The growth of the association was creating cramped office space for Johnson, who had been granted a room in Folwell Hall by the Board of

Regents in 1907, and then space in the Library Building in 1912. An assistant secretary, Marjorie Sloane, had worked with Johnson and the association from 1909, providing much needed help but exacerbating the space problem. By 1919, the GAA was contemplating a request to the regents for a more suitable location – an idea that was deferred when E.B. Johnson resigned as executive secretary and was replaced by E.B. Pierce (1904), another former University registrar, who was already employed by the regents and had his own office.

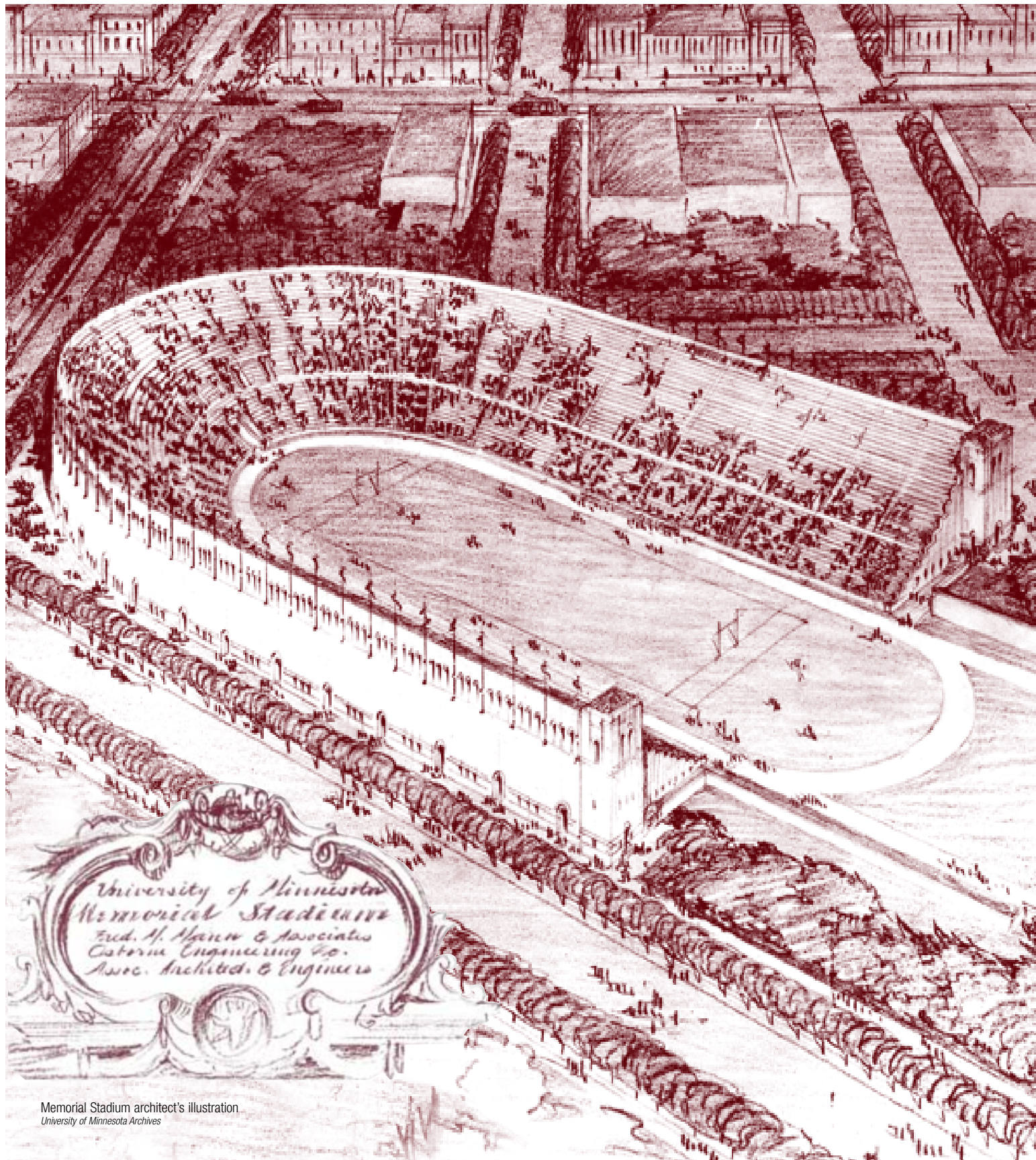
The increasing directness of the link between the alumni and the Board of Regents, best exemplified by the hiring of Pierce, would signal a subtle shift in the history of the GAA. In the future, the two entities would become closer allies in efforts at improving the University; at the same time, the alumni association would lose some of the independence that had been the hallmark of its earliest years.

E.B. Johnson's departure marked the end of an era at the GAA. After 14 years as executive secretary and 19 years as editor of *The Weekly*, he headed toward private business. By the end of his long and effective tenure, Johnson had helped raise the assets of the association to \$35,000 and life memberships to over 3,500. His frank and forceful editing of *The Weekly* had made it such an essential part of post-campus life that University President Marion L. Burton told a 1919 audience that subscribing to the journal "is the first duty of an alumnus."

The other pioneering force, Henry Nachtrieb, had already left his office. He had served as GAA president from its birth to 1916. A vigorous man who'd overseen a vigorous, young organization, Nachtrieb was something of a character too. Aside from his scholarly pursuits at the University, his work heading the state's Geological and Natural History Survey, and his presidency of the alumni association, Nachtrieb was the faculty adviser to University athletics as well. He also made it his lonely mission to reform and simplify the spelling of overcomplicated English. You became "yu"; shall became "shal"; through became "thru." He said his two major accomplishments as GAA president were removing the University from the egregious oversight of the Board of Control and bringing those salary increases to faculty. But perhaps more important, he and Johnson, along with a growing legion of University graduates and other stalwarts of the alumni board, such as Charles Keyes (1896), Soren Rees (1895, '97), and W.I. Gray (1892), had helped give alumni something they hadn't had in the past: a forceful voice in the life of the University of Minnesota. It would continue to be heard, loud and clear, in the years to come.



E.B. Pierce (1904), GAA executive secretary, 1920-48  
University of Minnesota Archives



Memorial Stadium architect's illustration.  
University of Minnesota Archives

## 1920

E.B. Johnson (1888) retired after 15 years as executive secretary and E.B. Pierce (1904), University registrar from 1904 to 1920, succeeded him. According to his secretary of 28 years: "E.B. [Johnson] was a vigorous and dynamic leader in anything he undertook."

## 1920

The GAA began receiving financial subsidies from the University, thereby becoming an integral part of the University.

## 1921

A resolution stated that the GAA should quickly take the necessary action to use alumni funds for the purpose of building memorials on campus. Within one month, students and alumni had donated \$665,000, the most ever generated by a campus campaign in the U.S.

## 1921

Turmoil in the Athletics Department prompted the GAA to establish a committee on athletics, which called for a complete reorganization of the department, and to volunteer to help the Board of Regents plan this new department and choose the new director.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Building a Great University

### *The GAA Matures*

As the General Alumni Association was reaching its adolescence, the campus itself was aging and proving inadequate to the needs of a growing student body. Enrollment had jumped from 6,000 to 8,000 after World War I, but the physical nature of the University had not grown commensurately. Football, for example, was more popular than ever. Enormous stadiums, capable of holding tens of thousands of fans, were being erected across the country, but Gopher games were still being played at Northrop Field, which was less a stadium than a yard. Next door, the Armory, considered musty and medieval when it housed the first meeting of the GAA in 1904, had not improved with age, yet it remained the campus home for artistic performances and social gatherings.

But even as the need for campus improvements was rising, state funds were being squeezed. An attempted \$3-million slash to the University's budget in the spring of 1921 prompted a concerted protest

on the part of alumni, faculty, and students. The University had requested \$8 million, but the state wanted to grant \$2.5 million for each year of the biennium – a devastating cut of nearly 40 percent of the U's request. The GAA helped organize a campaign that inundated the state legislature with phone calls, letters, and telegrams urging a reconsideration of budget cuts. The effort was largely successful and most funds were restored.

The alumni association continued to assert itself in the fall of that year, this time in a squabble involving University athletics.

Dr. Henry Williams, professor of medicine and director of athletics, had coached the Gopher football team since 1900. He was on the job as the game grew from a club sport into an intercollegiate tradition that drew the intense interest of sports fans across Minnesota. His championship teams of the Western Conference (forerunner to the Big Ten) in 1900, '03, and '04 helped foster football mania in the state. Another round of championships in the 1910s kept the Gophers in the limelight.

But the stakes of the game grew with its popularity, and when the fortunes of Williams' teams seemed spent during the losing seasons of 1919, '20, and '21, there were loud grumblings about the coach, and even louder grumblings about the way the Athletics Department was administered. Put frankly, Williams was considered to be past his prime. The Athletics Department, which was governed by a cumbersome committee of seven students, two faculty, and two alumni, was amateurish and too large to efficiently administer athletics. Though large universities across the Midwest had been hiring athletics directors to oversee expanding programs, the position had not yet been created at the University of Minnesota.

Cornerstone dedication  
for Memorial Stadium, 1924  
*University of Minnesota Archives*



1923

The contract to build Memorial Stadium was let in March; the first football game was played there against North Dakota on October 4, 1924. The Gophers won, 14-0.

1928

A letter to alumni on legislative bills that would prohibit the teaching of evolution stated: "... you will render a real service to the university and to education if you will see, telephone, telegraph, or write your representatives ... urging them to kill these bills." The bill was killed, 55-7.

1928

The class of 1903 celebrated its 25th anniversary with a campaign to raise \$5,000 as a nest egg for a building on campus to be known as Alumni Hall.

1929

Northrop Memorial Auditorium, made possible by contributions from alumni and friends, was dedicated to Dr. Cyrus Northrop in a three-phase, public celebration that included a Minneapolis Symphony concert.



As the 1921 season ended, the turmoil peaked, and the GAA joined in the dispute. It established a committee on athletics, which called for a complete reorganization of the Athletics Department, "along the lines followed at a number of western universities." Meaning the department should "employ an athletics director who shall give his entire time to [the] work [of the department]." The committee further volunteered to appoint a committee of five to help the Board of Regents plan this department and help choose the new director. It also suggested that all coaches currently working within the old system tender their resignations until the new department was up and running.

Now there were grumblings from defenders of Williams, including members of the GAA. A compromise was suggested by a group of Chicago alums, which called for a reorganization of athletics with a new athletics director, but to keep Williams on for another year.

Newly appointed University President Lotus Coffman had once said that the day the demand for championship football teams influenced coaching decisions would be "the death knell of football as a college sport." But he was convinced by the merits of the reorganization plan presented by the alumni. In a matter of weeks, a new athletics director, Fred Luehring, was hired and all coaches at the University resigned. Henry Williams was not rehired.

### *The Spirit of Giving*

As early as 1918, President Coffman's predecessor, Marion Burton, had appealed to alumni "to help bring about the erection" of a University auditorium "large enough to bring together all the students of the University at one time." A year later, the alumni association passed a resolution for a memorial to be built on campus, honoring the men and women who had served in the war. The campus mall was proposed as the site for the memorial. The auditorium would head one end of the green and a bell tower would be at the other end. Then, in 1920, the Board of Regents purchased a tract of land near the inter-campus railroad line "with the announced intention of utilizing it, at some time in the future, for an athletic field for intra-mural and intercollegiate athletics."

The wheels were beginning to turn toward the creation of campus improvements. Unfortunately, there was still no state money to be had for either an auditorium or a football stadium.

The cries for a new football field, in particular, were getting ever louder. "Ohio started off at the very pit of the depression to raise a million for a stadium," stated an editorial in *The Weekly*. "The fund was over-subscribed by many thousands of dollars. Stanford University, on top of a general maintenance appeal to [its] alumni, decided that [it] too must have a stadium. [Stanford] got one. So did the University of Washington." So did California. So did Columbia. So did Kansas and Missouri.

Hardest for Gopher fans to take, however, was the comparison to conference schools. *The Weekly* wrote, "With the exception of Chicago, Minnesota is located in the largest of the conference towns but has an athletic field that seats little more than 19,000.

Towns like Iowa City, Ann Arbor, Columbus and Urbana have [stadiums] that seat from 45,000 to 75,000. The Gopher field has become the butt of many a college joke."

But not for long.

In 1922, the complaints spurred action. The various construction proposals were combined and fund-raising was organized and undertaken by a new organization

called the Greater University Corporation. Formed by a group of visionary alumni organized largely by the GAA and the Board of Regents, the Greater University Corporation would lead a campaign dedicated to raising the \$2 million necessary to construct both a football stadium and an auditorium for the arts. University graduate Lyman Pierce (1892) was hired to head the corporation. Charles Ireys (1900), who was president of the alumni association, became the corporation's vice president and E.B. Pierce, who was the GAA secretary, served in the same position for the corporation. On its board were some of the most distinguished citizens in the state, including James F. Bell (1901), Alfred Pillsbury (1894), John Pillsbury (1900), and Fred B. Snyder. It was determined that the stadium would be dedicated as a memorial to the "Soldier Dead of Minnesota" and the auditorium to the beloved former University President Cyrus Northrop.



Northrop Field, circa 1900  
University of Minnesota Archives

The campaign was kicked off in October 1922 on the campus with amazing enthusiasm, highlighted by football field performances by a pair of “rooter kings” named Roman Bohnen (1924) and George Lamb (1922). Both were student actors whose clowning during halftime shows “never failed to bring a shower of coins to help fill the account,” according to University historian James Gray (1920). Faculty and students were coaxed out of more than \$600,000 in startup funds – an extraordinary initial outpouring. Pledges averaged \$80 per student in an era when \$80 was a typical monthly wage for many workers in the country.

The alumni were next and the pressure to give was intense. Lyman Pierce pledged that the campaign would approach every alumnus for a donation. “And by alumnus we mean every man and woman who has ever attended the university.”

*The Weekly* became the house organ for the campaign and its “sell” was no less hard. “Your Alma Mater Has Asked Little,” read one headline on the effort. “In more than half a century of splendid history Minnesota has asked nothing from the sons and daughters she prepared for the battles of life. In the majority of colleges, the alumni have been asked repeatedly to contribute to some sort of financial program. Many schools, like Yale, practically assess their former students. . . .”

The campaign unabashedly pitted city against city, state versus state, and alumni club versus alumni club. The city of Minneapolis donated \$161,862 on the first day of a local drive. The north California alumni club walloped the south California club. The three major cities in the state, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, raised a total of \$785,000 compared to \$99,000 in other areas of Minnesota.

The money poured in. Before 1923 was through, there was more than enough to completely fund the

construction of Memorial Stadium. In March 1924, ground was broken for the football field, and by October – 42 days ahead of schedule – the University of Minnesota Gophers were ready to host their first home game there.

The formal dedication of the stadium came on November 15, 1924. More than 17,000 alumni, faculty, students, and friends of the University had contributed to its construction and a huge number of them were among the 40,000 fans that had come that day to witness the ceremony. There was also a football game being played that day between the Gophers and the defending Big Ten champ, Illinois, led by All-American Red Grange. Thomas Wallace (1893) of the Greater University Corporation gave the dedication speech. On behalf of all the contributors, he presented the stadium to the University of Minnesota as “a token of their love for Alma Mater and as a memorial to all the men and women who in times past in our country’s hour of need unselfishly answered her call.”

As a further token of love for alma mater, the Gophers upset Illinois 20-7, squashing any hopes of a repeat championship for the Fighting Illini.

Four years later, in conjunction with the 1928 homecoming festivities, the cornerstone was laid for the Cyrus Northrop Auditorium. Within the stone was set a box containing, among other items, a biography of Northrop and a collection of his speeches; a list of workmen on the project; copies of *The Minnesota Alumni Weekly* and *The Minnesota Daily* describing the funding drive; and, finally, a list of all the workers on the fund-raising campaign as well as the 18,000 students, faculty, and alumni who had contributed to the construction.

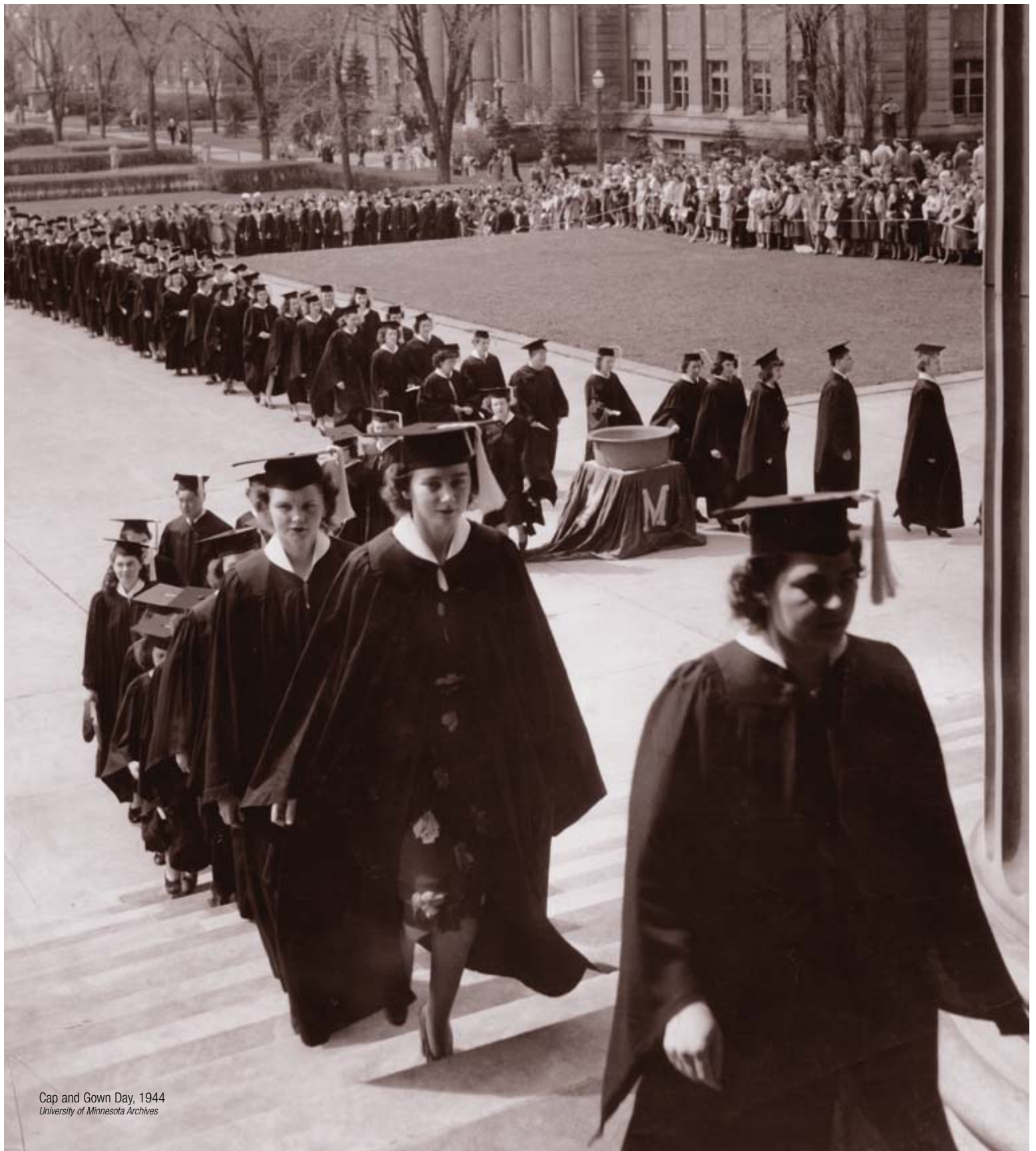
The total raised by the Greater University Corporation for both Memorial Stadium and Northrop Auditorium exceeded \$1.7 million. Students and faculty contributed \$650,000; alumni gave over \$900,000.

Funds for the auditorium had been pledged simultaneously to those that accrued so quickly for Memorial Stadium. In fact, collecting all of the contributions for the joint projects took time and the building of Northrop was slowed in the process. But the structure was finished in 1929, less than a year after the cornerstone was laid. Its first public programs came in October of that year with concerts performed by the Minneapolis Symphony and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The formal dedication came during homecoming celebrations on November 15, with performances by the University Band and University Singers, and addresses by Governor Theodore Christianson and Board of Regents Chair Fred B. Snyder.



Northrop Auditorium under construction, 1929  
University of Minnesota Archives





Cap and Gown Day, 1944  
University of Minnesota Archives

## 1938

The Board of Regents' application to the federal government for funds to help build a new student union was approved, with a guarantee that the University would provide 55 percent of the cost of the building.

## 1939

Alumni clubs around the country sponsored a series of public golf exhibitions featuring "America's greatest golfer," Patty Berg (1951). Proceeds went to the student union building fund.

## 1940

Coffman Memorial Union, dedicated to President Lotus Coffman, was opened.

## 1942

A GAA mailing urged alumni to ascertain the attitude toward higher education and the University of particular candidates for seats in the Minnesota House and Senate: "If the candidate's attitude were adverse, a few salient points ... might change his opinion decidedly."

## CHAPTER THREE

# A Growing Organization

### *Alumni Chapters Proliferate*

From its inception in 1850 to the 1930s, the University of Minnesota had grown from a one-building campus to a bustling institution that ranked as one of the nation's premier universities. Its alumni could be found from coast to coast and on several continents, as well as in every nook and cranny of the state of Minnesota.

Local chapters, initially called clubs or units, predated the formation of the General Alumni Association itself. The first out-of-state group was established in Chicago in 1895. A second was organized in Omaha in 1898, and a third in New York in 1900. The number of units, both in- and out-of-state, boomed through the '10s and '20s.

E.B. Pierce was so frequently asked for information on how to establish local alumni groups that he created a form letter that gave step-by-step instructions on how to organize membership meetings. The orders could be pretty specific.

"Make arrangements for a general alumni dinner to be held at six o'clock or six-thirty," he advised, "then at 8:15 adjourn to a hall, church, school, or other public meeting place and have some distinguished member of the University staff speak on a subject of general interest to the community." Alternatively, prospective club members might "arrange an alumni meeting at six or six-thirty on the same day as the meeting of [a local] Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, or other civic [club]. Have University staff man speak at the luncheon meeting of this organization and later at the dinner meeting of the alumni."

Pierce provided a list of University speakers and topics of their speeches, including Henry Schmitz, head of the Department of Forestry, talking about the "Problems of Reforestation," and E.C. Stakman, professor of plant pathology, suggesting ways to "Take the Guesswork Out of Crop Production."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Gopher football highlight reels were a far more popular form of entertainment at alumni club meetings across the country. It was the heyday of Golden Gopher

football. University graduate Bernie Bierman (1916) became head football coach in 1932 and proceeded to lead the Gophers to a remarkable six conference titles and four national championships in the next eight seasons. The ascendancy of Gopher football coincided with the ascendancy of newsreel-style films, and no winter alumni gathering was complete without a recap of

the sterling season just

passed. The exploits of stars like Ed Widseth, George Franck, Charles "Bud" Wilkinson (1937), and Minnesota's only Heisman Trophy winner, Bruce Smith, kept audiences content through their post-meal coffee.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a whole lot of cheery news elsewhere in the nation during these years of the Great Depression. Once again, the University felt the pinch of reduced revenues from the state and was asked to reduce its budget by more than 13 percent in 1932. Salaries were cut and student fees increased. The alumni association was presented with a report by the U of M comptroller that showed state appropriations had dropped from \$300 per student in 1914 to \$208 per student in 1931.



Coffman Memorial Union under construction, 1940  
*University of Minnesota Archives*

#### 1947

The Greater University Fund, through which alumni and friends could make gifts to the University, was established with a first-year goal of \$50,000.

#### 1948

The GAA was reincorporated, took the name Minnesota Alumni Association (MAA), became a partner with the University in the support of alumni services, and the dream of an alumni center began again.

#### 1948

E.B. Pierce retired after 28 years as executive secretary. Ed Haislet (1931) was hired as director of alumni relations and executive director of the MAA.

#### 1949

The first U of M scholarships sponsored by the MAA were awarded to 38 Minnesota high school graduates for their freshman year.

Despite these difficulties, the U remained a growing and forward-looking institution, nationally recognized for innovative academic support programs and student guidance, counseling, and personnel services. The General College was opened in the fall of 1932 to cater to students who had not yet selected a field of study or who might not remain at the University to complete their BA degrees.

In 1933, University President Lotus Coffman took advantage of a New Deal program called the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to establish a student aid program that was the first of its kind at the University and in the nation. Over 400 students entered the college under the auspices of the aid program during the winter quarter of 1933-34 and soon the Minnesota model was being pursued by schools across the country. Later in the decade, the University again applied for federal funds, this time from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The U wanted to build a student union.

### *A Gathering Place for Students*

There were separate unions for men and women, and a Student Union Association had existed on the Minnesota campus as early as 1908. The idea of a building to house that organization was as old as the association itself. E.B. Johnson, as editor of *The Weekly*, had advocated for a structure from the beginning. He also served as secretary on the union's first board of governors, a position that E.B. Pierce assumed after Johnson left the alumni association. Pierce ultimately became president of the Minnesota Union Board of Governors and, along with other members of the GAA, played a crucial role in the construction of Coffman Memorial Union.

Pleas for funds to construct a union building in 1910 – one of which was sent to Andrew Carnegie, whose philanthropy at the time was funding library construction across the nation – fell on unreceptive ears. In 1913, space was made for the union in the old chemistry building and there it sat until the idea of appealing to the WPA for funds arose during the mid-'30s.

An initial proposal for funds to the government from the University's Board of Regents was turned down, but a revamped request asking for 45 percent of the cost of the \$2-million structure was accepted by

the WPA. As generous as it was, the federal endowment still left more than \$1 million in funds to be raised by the University and, as it had with

Memorial Stadium and Northrop Auditorium, the U turned to its alumni for help.

In his dual role as president of the Union Board of Governors and executive director of the GAA, E.B. Pierce was a critical component of the funding drive. So, too, was a revamped Greater University Corporation, which was once again called upon to oversee fund-raising efforts. The remarkable Patty Berg

(1951), who as an undergraduate at the U in the 1930s was already one of the premier golfers in the world, was enlisted by Pierce and the GAA to play a series of exhibition matches with Gopher graduates in South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and California. The local alumni club in each of the states was encouraged to gather donors for her visit.

The faculty gave in generous amounts to the new union, spurred by the knowledge that a swank Campus Club was to be part of the structure. Alumni were encouraged to consider how nice it would be to have a central gathering spot on campus for fall football outings and they gave generously.

Pierce was tireless in his efforts. Through his many roles on campus, and his sterling ties to alumni across the country, he was able to lead a campaign that, despite a Depression-era economy, was able to raise enough funds to match the federal grant, including \$360,000 in contributions from University alumni and friends. The rest of the cost was bound over to indebtedness.

University President Lotus Coffman had died unexpectedly during the early stages of the fund-raising. The union became a memorial to him and his administration. Construction began on August 1, 1939, and Coffman Memorial Union was opened just before classes began in the fall of 1940. It was one of the largest unions in the country and was featured in both *Time* magazine and the *Saturday Evening Post*.



Students play pool in Coffman Union, 1940  
University of Minnesota Archives

### *WWII and the Big Boom*

All of American society was changed by World War II and the University of Minnesota was no exception. While continuing its essential educational mission, the U became a training ground for servicemen and women, as well as a research center for the war effort.



Gas rationing limited the amount of travel done by the citizenry and thus limited the number of alumni gatherings during the war years. The alumni association tightened its belt by cutting back on the publication schedule for its magazine. *The Weekly* became a monthly, a fact that precipitated the first of several name changes. The journal was now called *The Minnesota Alumnus*. The magazine assumed as its duties the creation of a comprehensive card file of war casualties of Minnesota alumni and a listing of all decorations granted to former students. In 1944, *The Alumnus* won an Award of Excellence from the American Alumni Council for its outstanding reports on the war program at the U.

E.B. Pierce continued to serve as executive director of the GAA, an office he would ultimately hold for 28 years (he'd also worked in various capacities at the University for 16 years before that). Pierce was a fixture on campus – an institution in his own right. Known simply as E.B., it was said that the number of former students he could greet with a personal touch would itself constitute a thick alumni directory.

Pierce had redefined and broadened the position of executive director. At the same time, he helped link the association more closely with the University and its Board of Regents than it had ever been under E.B. Johnson. When Pierce was appointed to his position with the GAA in 1920, he continued to work as field secretary to the Board of Regents and would maintain these dual assignments through the length of his career.

But even as the role of executive secretary was broadened by Pierce, the scope and mission of the alumni association was somewhat constricted. The various college alumni associations at the U remained loosely affiliated with the GAA, never really solidifying their ties with the central organization. The most important alumni groups were those comprised of members of individual class years and they tended to be extremely independent. Many local clubs were instituted under Pierce, but the small alumni association staff could provide little direction for these groups. The one and only consistent means of fund-raising was through the sale of GAA life memberships, which meant budgets and programs were small and what influence the association had on a variety of matters was centered largely in E.B.'s office.

A note in the alumni board minutes of February 18, 1916, gives meaning to how important independence was to the founders: "If the alumni are to be really useful and serve the University to the best of their ability, in short, if they are to do what all good citizens have a right to expect of them, they must maintain their independence and their right to express themselves fully, freely and directly, upon any matter connected with the University. It is inevitable that at times they should differ from the Board of Regents. . . ."

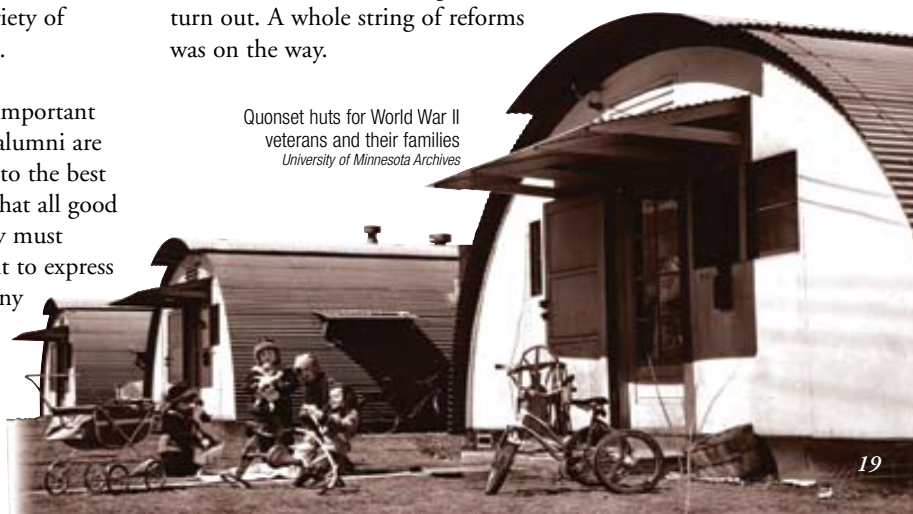
The sense of independence was dampened during Pierce's tenure in part for financial reasons. The GAA made an annual contribution to the University's general funds (\$2,500 in 1940). In turn, the University paid the salary of Pierce and all of the GAA staff, with the exception of the editor of *The Alumnus*. In addition, the U provided offices for Pierce, the editor of the magazine, the editor of the alumni directory, and a handful of assistants. Under the circumstances, it was hard to know where the University and its Board of Regents ended and the alumni association began. Pierce felt that this was as it should be. "My own feeling," he wrote in a 1940 letter to a North Carolina colleague, "is that the University should finance the entire alumni program. I know there are some who oppose this plan very positively . . . but I still believe that alumni matters are a part of the University's responsibility and that as time goes on most institutions will appoint a director of alumni relations."

Whether this was an ideal arrangement or not would need to be determined. In the meantime, the University of Minnesota was about to undergo a remarkable change. The end of the war and the GI Bill brought unprecedented numbers of students to the Twin Cities. In the fall of 1945, nearly 12,000 young men and women were enrolled at the University. Just a year later, an incredible 27,982 had enlisted for classes and more than 18,000 of these were veterans.

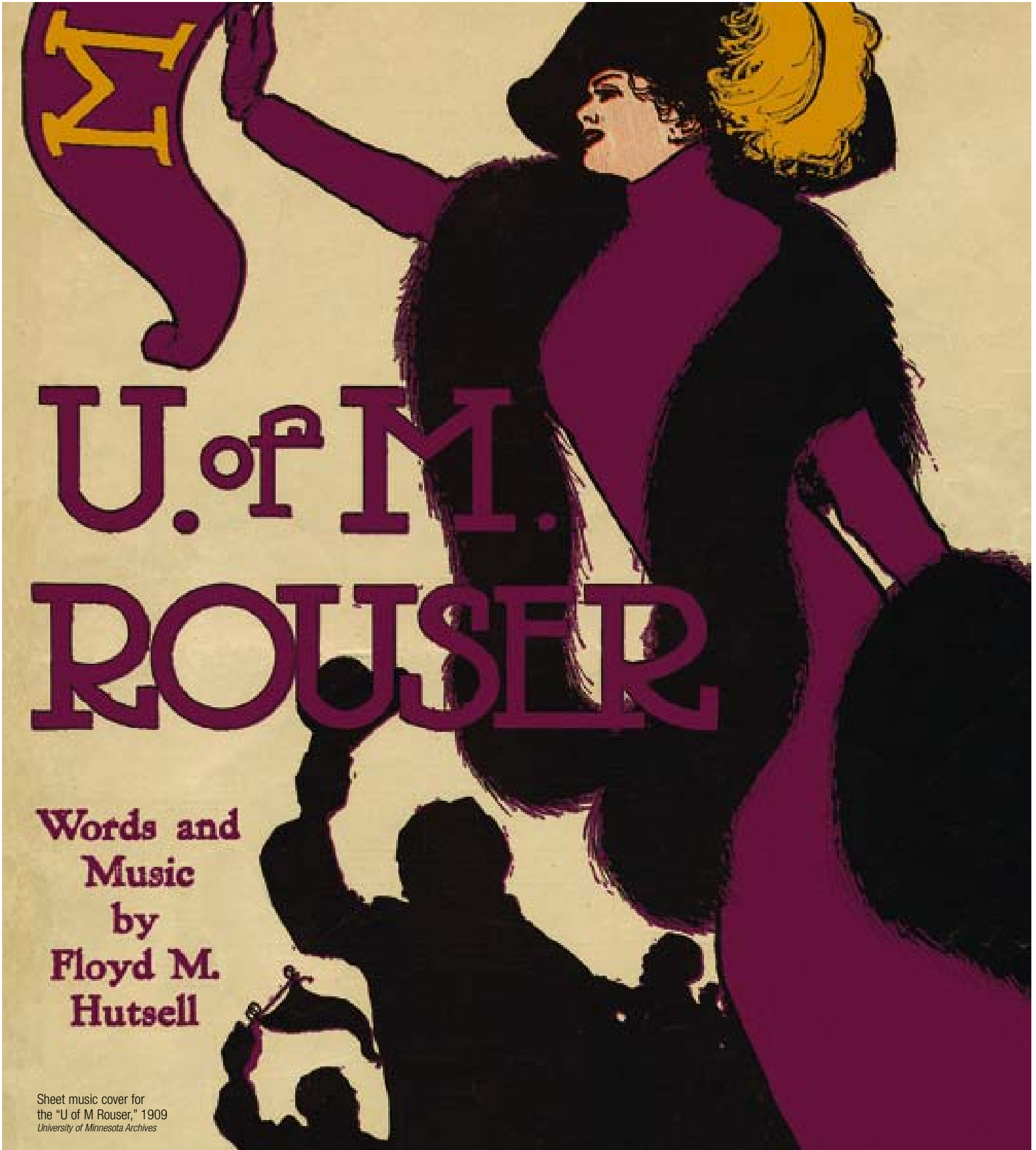
Housing shortages were acute. Class sizes were astronomical. Sleeping quarters were erected inside Memorial Stadium to house some of the students and the dormitories were "double-decked" to house even more. Still, a great many of the campus newcomers were married veterans who needed family housing. Out on Como Avenue in St. Paul, the University hauled in trailers and tacked up Quonset huts to offer bare-bones shelter for all the new learners they could manage.

It wouldn't be long before these same numbers began to swell the ranks of the alumni association. The question that many within the GAA were beginning to ask was whether or not the small operation managed by E.B. Pierce could handle the demands to come.

Not without some reorganization, it would turn out. A whole string of reforms was on the way.



Quonset huts for World War II veterans and their families  
University of Minnesota Archives



# U. of M. ROUSER

Words and  
Music  
by  
Floyd M.  
Hutsell

Sheet music cover for  
the "U of M Rouser," 1909  
*University of Minnesota Archives*

## 1950

The alumni magazine took up the issue of whether Gopher football games should be televised. While alumni backed the idea, the editor wrote: "all indications . . . seem to show that TV will definitely result in a smaller attendance and, therefore, a lessened income."

## 1954

In his report at the annual meeting, Ed Haislet lamented the MAA's lack of adequate space: "Finally, it was indicated that there was a great need for new office quarters for the Association. . . . Badly needed is an alumni building."

## 1959

In speaking about the state of higher education and University requests for funds from the legislature, President James Morrill said: "We have a real need of mobilization of outside support and the Alumni Association will have to assist in this particular aspect."

## 1960

Six alumni received the first Alumni Service Awards for service to the University, its schools, colleges, departments, faculty, and the alumni association.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Continuous Change, Consistent Spirit

### Strategies for Change

Changes within the General Alumni Association began in the fall of 1946 with the establishment of a new strategy for a more coherent form of alumni association fund-raising. Annual giving became the focus of this effort and a \$50,000 goal was set for that first year. In addition, the association appointed a committee “to study alumni contributions for general University purposes” and efforts were made to revitalize local chapters, which had been largely dormant during the war.

The work of the alumni contributions committee resulted in the birth of the Greater University Fund, established in May 1947. This home for alumni donations was a descendant of the Greater University Corporation, but was intended to be a more permanent receptacle for gifts. Alumni donations were to be used to fund programs for which other moneys were not available. The fund was sponsored by the alumni association and held in custody by the University’s Board of Regents.

In August 1948, the General Alumni Association became the Minnesota Alumni Association (MAA) and was reincorporated as an entity distinct from the University and distinct from the Greater University Fund. All of the GAA assets were transferred to the MAA. More changes were coming.

E.B. Pierce retired after 28 years of service to the University and the alumni association. He was replaced by Ed Haislet (1931), an associate professor in the U’s Athletics Department and local director of the Golden Gloves Boxing Tournament. Haislet was a no-nonsense administrator who would, in time, become another legendary figure in the alumni offices. He was given the task of leading the MAA into the post-war era and his first assignment was to modernize and systematize an office that had lacked professional acumen.

A new bookkeeping system was inaugurated and the budget was revised and increased on the basis of

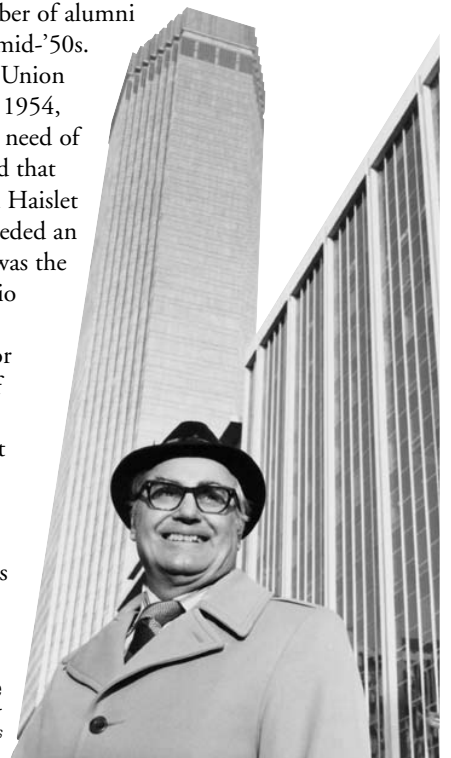
expected revenue from an expanded fund-raising campaign. Recordkeeping had been haphazard at best. There weren’t enough personnel to handle the ever-increasing number of alumni, nor was there an accurate figure of membership in the association. To rectify the situation, a membership secretary was hired and audits were conducted of the various types of membership. The records and mailing offices were revamped and more staff hired. By June 1950, office staff had been increased to 18 full-time and six part-time employees. MAA membership jumped to 10,000.

“Service” became the watchword of the organization, both to alumni and the University. The Freshman Scholarship Program, established in 1948 by means of the Greater University Fund, was flourishing. By 1950, there was a fund of \$10,000 and awards were sent to 38 students. The membership application process was simplified and the total number of alumni clubs shot up to 100 by the mid-’50s.

MAA offices at Coffman Union bustled with activity and, by 1954, were already cramped and in need of more space. In a report issued that year to the alumni board, Ed Haislet said that the MAA “badly needed an alumni building. That such was the trend across the country. Ohio State University had just remodeled an old building for alumni use; the University of California had just built an alumni building.” Haislet felt that a committee should be appointed to study this important matter.

It wasn’t the first time this issue was raised and it wouldn’t be the last.

Ed Haislet (1931), MAA executive director, 1948-76, near IDS Tower  
*University of Minnesota Archives*



### 1962

The MAA was the first Big Ten organization to offer life insurance to alumni. A \$10,000 policy had an annual premium of only \$26.

### 1963

The Alumni Club was opened in the Sheraton Ritz Hotel, Minneapolis, as a place for alumni to meet for lunch and dinner. Within a year it had 1,800 members.

### 1965

The annual Horace T. Morse-Amoco Distinguished Teaching Award was established to recognize exceptional scholar-teachers for their outstanding contributions to undergraduate education.

### 1969

The MAA broadened its role in the formulation of University policy when President Malcolm Moos requested the appointment of 10 alumni to serve on five University Senate and Assembly committees.



## *Gopher Spirit*

Even as service flourished, promoting spirit and enthusiasm for alma mater remained a high priority. The advent and popularity of television in the early '50s raised suggestions that the alumni association and the University should produce public service programs promoting campus life. This enthusiasm for the new medium apparently didn't extend to televising Gopher football games. The editor of the alumni magazine shook his head at the notion in an editorial: "All indications . . . seem to show that TV will definitely result in a smaller attendance and, therefore, a lessened income" [to support the other athletic programs].

There were other ideas for raising funds. Josten's, Inc. was commissioned to create an official alumni ring, which went on sale in 1953 for prices that ranged from \$35 to \$40. A committee was appointed to help sort through copyright issues involving University of Minnesota songs whose rights had been assigned (or not) to the alumni association by their authors. This was a prelude to the release of an album of Minnesota tunes in 1951 that included traditional songs like "The Minnesota Rouser" and "Hail! Minnesota," as well as new songs created especially for the album, including "Mighty Minnesota March," "The Golden Gopher Line," and "The Minnesota Victory March."

University finances and growing enrollment continued to play a significant part in alumni affairs throughout the 1950s. President James Morrill asked for alumni help in convincing each of the decade's legislative sessions of the soundness of U of M budgetary needs. Even so, the baby boom was at its height and everyone recognized that student enrollment and the U were not going to be shrinking anytime soon. In 1961, the legislature balked at the Board of Regents' budget request and the University was forced to increase annual tuition by about \$30 for resident students and between \$60 and \$75 for nonresidents.

## *Everything's Coming Up Roses*

In 1960, the University of Minnesota was perhaps at the height of its prestige and renown. It was the largest university in the Big Ten and the fourth largest in the nation. Five United States senators – Hubert Humphrey (1939) and Eugene McCarthy (1939) of Minnesota, Wayne Morse (1928) of Oregon, Everett

Dirksen (1918) of Illinois, and Quentin Burdick (1932) of North Dakota – were U of M alumni. The first open-heart surgery had been successfully performed at University Hospitals six years before and its medical school was known throughout the world.

But U of M sports fans craved one measure of glory that remained elusive: the Golden Gophers had yet to win a Rose Bowl.

At the start of the 1960 football season, few could have predicted the Golden Gophers would be making the cross-country train trip come January. The team had won just two games the season before and the Big Ten, especially Iowa, was loaded with talent. But as the gun sounded on the close of a season-ending win over Wisconsin, fans could be forgiven for their surprise at the success of their 8-1 Big Ten champion team. Students spilled into the streets in Minneapolis later that month (November 1960), when word came that the team was ranked number one in both major football polls and had finally received an invitation from Pasadena. For the first time in University of Minnesota history, the Gophers were headed to the Rose Bowl.

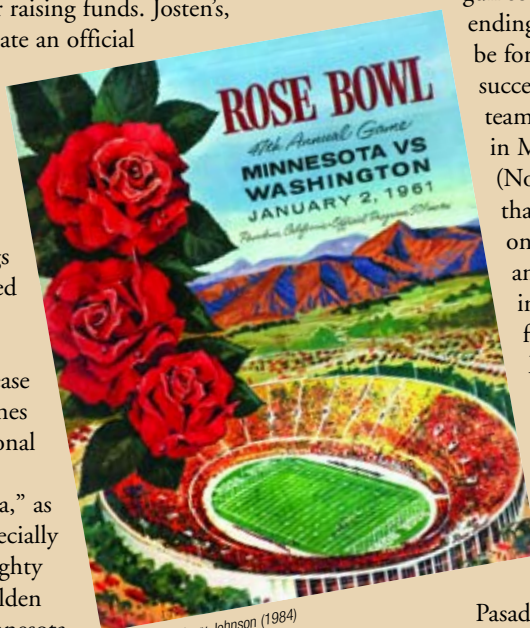
Ed Haislet and the MAA had a busy time ahead of them. Plans were made for an alumni-sponsored trip to the West Coast and trains loaded with Gopher fans headed for

Pasadena in late December.

A gala for the visiting entourage from Minnesota was held at the plush Beverly Hills Hilton. Stars at the party included Bob Hope, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Gene Autry, and Gordon MacRae.

Whether heads were turned by all this glitterati is impossible to judge, but the fact of the matter is the team came out flat on game day, January 2, 1961. They played the first half in a California smog of their own making and fell behind their opponents, the Washington Huskies, by 17-0. Their second-half play was more representative of the team that had ended the season number one in the nation but, sadly, the Gophers couldn't overcome the deficit and lost 17-7.

For once, however, the phrase "there's always next year" held true. In the fall of 1961, the U of M football team returned Sandy Stephens and Bill Munsey, and added All-American Bobby Bell to an already solid squad. The Gophers played well but finished in second place in Big Ten Conference play. When conference champion Ohio State's faculty voted against accepting an invitation from the Rose Bowl committee, the U of M found itself, once again, on the road to Pasadena.



Collection of Jerry Johnson (1984)

Instead of taking the train to the West Coast, charter alumni groups flew – a first for Big Ten alumni visiting a game. The pre-game party was again headlined by Bob Hope, but Minnesota sportscaster Halsey Hall was brought in to serve as toastmaster and, according to Haislet, “ran the best party ever.” Perhaps the Midwestern flavor to pre-game festivities made the Gophers more comfortable this time around. The Golden Gophers played a superb first half against the UCLA Bruins. They took a 14-3 lead into the locker room and never looked back. The final score was 21-3 and, at the end of the game, the Gophers hoisted coach Murray Warmath on their shoulders and strode off the field into the Pacific sunset.

### *Expanding the Mission*

As the post-World War II era evolved into the turbulent 1960s, the MAA began to modernize and expand its mission of serving the University of Minnesota and its alumni. In 1961, there were 17,000 members, but Ed Haislet acknowledged a need for a more effective means of increasing membership. A direct mail application process had been the association’s sole tool for adding members, but a lengthy Statement of Need presented to the alumni board that year suggested more had to be done. “To increase income so that . . . additional services can be instituted,” a full-time membership director had to be hired, wrote Haislet. “The University of California has the largest paid membership of any alumni association . . . They use a sales program of paid salesmen who make personal calls [to] all prospective members. The salesmen work on a commission basis. They are carefully trained and work both by phone and personal contact.” The MAA, by contrast, ranked last in the Big Ten in number of staff.

Steps in modernizing the situation were taken in 1962, when the MAA became the first alumni association to put all its records on computer. The first membership drive supported by phone work was instituted as well, when four part-time people made evening calls to prospective members as follow-ups to the direct mailings. By 1965, membership had jumped to 24,400.

Haislet was instrumental in fashioning one of the MAA’s most innovative programs, also in 1962, when the organization became the first alumni group in the country to offer its members a life insurance program. An annual premium of \$26 bought a policy worth \$10,000. This pioneering program, one of the outstanding legacies of the Haislet years, would become a model for other alumni associations across the nation. By 1970, it insured more than 1,000 MAA members, and would become one of the most attractive features of membership.

Another Haislet innovation was instituted in 1963, when the MAA opened an Alumni Club in downtown Minneapolis at the Sheraton-Ritz Hotel to accommodate the tens of thousands of alumni who lived in the metropolitan Twin Cities area. Within a year, 1,800 members were wining and dining in the company of their fellow U of M alumni. In 1960, the MAA had presented its first Alumni Service Awards by recognizing six loyal alumni for their exceptional service to the association and the University. This award would become an annual tradition.

Collegiate alumni societies numbered 14 by 1965 and continued to grow to a total of 19. Local alumni chapters also continued to spread: to Jacksonville, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami, Florida; to India and Korea; and to the newest state in the union, Hawaii.

A highly successful alumni study program was begun in the late 1960s and the MAA sponsored tours to Russia, Rome, the Scandinavian countries, and Hawaii over the next several years.

One of the duties of the MAA executive director was fund-raising. At the June 1972 annual meeting, alumni board president Oscar Knutson (1919, ’27) announced that the fund would become part of the University Development Office, headed by Bob Odegard (1942), a former member of the MAA board. Knutson thanked the executive director for a fine job and commented: “The executive director should not be the fund-raising person. His job . . . is to plow the ground and plant the seed through which goodwill is built so in time a fund-raiser can reap the funds.”

### *Trying Times*

Space problems continued to plague the staff of the MAA through the 1960s. At association board meetings, Haislet made annual pleas for more elbow room and tentative plans were discussed for an alumni center to be built on the West Bank campus. That site was still being considered in 1970 when overcrowding forced the alumni association and its 14-member staff off-campus to a site at 2610 University Avenue, St. Paul. The MAA left Coffman Union after



Jim Watson (1942), alumni board president in 1969-70, presents the Outstanding Alumni Chapter award to Hugh John Morris (1947), of the Owatonna chapter.  
University of Minnesota Archives



more than 30 years, but still hadn't found its permanent home. Two years after this "temporary" move, the West Bank site was deemed unobtainable, and no strong prospect for a new home presented itself. The MAA was left isolated from the heart of the University.

To compound the problem, the University itself was experiencing a profound period of unrest. In January 1969, a group of students occupied Morrill Hall, demanding, among other things, academic support programs and the creation of an African American Studies department. Their success also paved the way for American Indian Studies and Chicano Studies departments. This was also a period of activism related to the Vietnam War. Protests became commonplace during the late '60s and early '70s. A student strike to protest the bombing of Cambodia in the spring of 1970 shut down the campus.

A number of alumni had a hard time reconciling the University they'd known as students and the one that had come to exist in the late '60s. Jim Watson (1942), who was president of the alumni

board in 1969-70, reported at the annual meeting that "the alumni office has received a steady stream of calls and letters" from concerned members. What was going on in the Twin Cities? And what could be done to rectify the situation? Alumni were adamant that the processes of the University not be disrupted, Watson told the meeting. "There is no argument with peaceful dissent, but they expect no interference [for] those who want to continue their education. They want classes to be taught and professors to be there to teach them. They don't want the University to give in to student demands, especially demands made by the radical elements of the student body." Watson commended President Malcolm Moos "for one of the outstanding jobs in the country [in] keeping peace and quiet amid dissent." But, speaking of alumni in general, he said, "They are particularly vehement against the University faculty members who shut down their classes and participated in the student protest."

Unfortunately for alumni, their sentiments could do little to reverse the general disaffection with establishment institutions that was sweeping the nation

in that era. Try as it might to uphold the traditions of the U and maintain some feelings of devotion to the school, it was not a good moment in history to be promoting alma mater. The physical distance of the MAA from the University didn't help matters. As much as the U seemed "out of touch" to many of its students, the alumni association was "out of touch" with what was happening at the U.

Membership stalled and then began to dip in 1969. Attendance declined at grand alumni traditions like the annual meeting, and homecoming festivities seemed desultory in comparison to years gone by. Likewise, the political activities of the MAA were a far cry from the days of the organization's founding. There was no unified legislative program to speak of. By

1972, the alumni board was plaintively asking for a meeting with the Board of Regents, at which it wondered how the MAA could "be of assistance to the University as regards legislative matters. . . . One of the hopes is that the MAA could work more closely with the [University] Administration on matters of mutual concern."

The MAA seemed

to lack vitality and, according to one observer, the organization began to look like "a kind of travel club and an old boys club for jocks and guys getting together and doing trips." It served "a limited function," but its association with the University "was tangential at best."

The MAA rallied in the mid-'70s. The campus was quieter and the Alumni Club, which had been closed for a year while looking for new facilities in downtown Minneapolis, reopened at the top of the spanking new IDS Tower. Memberships to the club were sold out before the place could open its doors. The next year, King Olav of Norway was feted there during his visit to the University. More good news came when the association membership slide was halted and, for the first time in MAA history, it topped the 25,000 mark.

An alumni association committee helped screen candidates to replace retiring University President Malcolm Moos. The committee met with the three major candidates for the position, including C. Peter Magrath, who became the University's 11th president in 1974.



Roy Wilkins (1923), left, with University Regent Wenda Moore and President C. Peter Magrath at 1976 honorary degree ceremony  
*University of Minnesota Archives*

But there was work left to do in revitalizing the MAA. While membership numbers were up slightly, they remained low relative to the overall numbers of U of M graduates and to the membership of other alumni organizations in the Big Ten and comparable institutions. The association also needed stronger ties to other departments and organizations within the University.

Perhaps most naggingly, the MAA still lacked any concrete presence on campus.

## *Transitions*

In 1976, after 28 years as executive director of the Minnesota Alumni Association, Ed Haislet retired. He had served with distinction under four University presidents and 26 alumni board presidents. Among his many accomplishments at the association, he said he was most proud of the Freshman Scholarship Program; the College Constituent Program; alumni development plans, including the insurance program; and the creation of the Alumni Club. Like his two predecessors in the position, Haislet had become an institution, and he left large shoes to fill.

Vince Bilotta, who came to the MAA from a similar position at the University of Kansas, was hired in 1976 to replace Haislet. The association had already begun to make changes before his arrival. Tom Swain (1942), who first began serving on the alumni board in 1972, had been asked in 1975 to head a committee for President Magrath. Its goal was to find better ways to coordinate efforts between the MAA, the University of Minnesota Foundation, the Minnesota Medical Foundation, and University Relations. A year later, Swain became president of the alumni board and, during his address at the annual meeting, he “re-expressed the association’s goal of becoming a more supportive arm of the University and a vehicle through which all alumni can rekindle their spirit and pride in our great University.”

As MAA board president, Swain formed a planning committee, headed by M. Elizabeth “Peg” Craig (1943, ’45), to evaluate existing association programs. Craig, who would become the first woman to serve as alumni board president, delivered a report that called for revisions in membership categories, a new dues structure, and an upgraded gift program. The report also recommended the reactivation of the building committee, which was to look for a site for a structure that would include not just the MAA but the U of M Foundation and the Minnesota Medical Foundation.

Bilotta had a tough assignment, made no easier by the fact that he was assuming the mantle of an association that had been shaped for 28 years by a formidable and forceful leader. Bilotta became the shortest-tenured MAA executive director when he left in 1979. He was replaced by Steve Roszell who had

served as executive director of the University of Missouri Alumni Association.

One of Roszell’s first tasks was to get the association back to its roots. He was instrumental in returning the MAA to campus and a new space in Morrill Hall. “That put us in a close working relationship with the administration and the U of M Foundation, which was also housed at Morrill,” says Roszell. “It gave us a presence on campus and, symbolically, was an important move for the association.”

Even as the MAA returned to familiar territory, it continued its pursuit of a place of its own. There were discussions in the early ’80s of building an alumni center on the East River Road Ramp site near Coffman Memorial Union, as well as talks about incorporating a center into the construction of the Radisson Hotel Metrodome, adjacent to the campus on Washington Avenue.

Reinvigorating the MAA and making it more relevant to the lives of younger alumni – those disaffected students from the late ’60s and early ’70s – became a top priority of the association. So, too, was an effort to link current students with alumni. In 1980, the University Student Alumni Association was formed. This group was composed of student leaders who were recruited by the MAA to be involved in alumni issues, to spread the word on campus, and, upon graduation, to serve as alumni advocates and volunteers.

The MAA began to change once again. Just as it had at earlier crucial moments in University history, the association began the process of readying itself for the future. A new generation of volunteer leaders started to appear on the rolls of the MAA alumni board: Harvey Mackay (1954), Fred Friswold (1958), David Mona (1965), Linda Mona (1967), Steve Goldstein, (1973), Penny Winton (1974), and Kenneth Glaser (1975). First with Roszell as executive director, then with his successor, Margaret Sughrue Carlson (1983), a new level of professionalism began to guide the administration of the alumni association.

All agreed that to meet the demands of a growing alumni constituency, the MAA would have to grow. It would need to link whole new generations of University of Minnesota graduates to a concept so old, it was still captured in the Latin term, *alma mater*.

The MAA would have to be more assertive. It would need to reclaim its role – first played when it was founded way back in 1904 – as an advocate for the University and its alumni. It needed to be a force in the state legislature and at the University itself.

It needed to exemplify the spirit of its graduates. And, perhaps most of all, it needed to be a physical presence in the life of the University of Minnesota.

All of that was coming.



Alumni volunteers advocate for U in 2002  
University of Minnesota Alumni Association

## 1973

The MAA had an active and important role in the selection of President Malcolm Moos's successor – C. Peter Magrath.

## 1974

The Alumni Club reopened on the 50th floor of the IDS Tower. A gala opening dinner was sold out in three days and some 2,000 MAA members attended an open house. Memberships were sold out before the club opened.

## 1975

MAA membership reached a milestone, going over the 25,000 mark for the first time.

## 1976

Ed Haislet was honored at the annual meeting upon his retirement as executive director after 28 years. Vince Bilotta was appointed to succeed him.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Rekindling the Fires of Advocacy

### Creating the RCAC

When the University was looking for a new president in 1984, the Minnesota Alumni Association asked the Board of Regents if it could help in the selection process. No, the association was told. Flat out. The group wasn't representative of the alumni body as a whole, the regents said. Its membership was less than one-eighth of the total number of alumni. The board also implied that complications of the public meeting laws in the state would make participation of the alumni association difficult to coordinate. But the real impetus for the rejection was pretty obvious to most members of the organization, as well as other U of M observers: the MAA was not much of a player in the political world of the University.

In eight decades, the association's role as an advocate for the University had shrunk from the headliner status of its founding years to a supporting role. And, while that might have suited some MAA members, others didn't like it at all. In 1985, the gavel of leadership at the association passed to two women of the latter frame of mind: Penny Winton (1974), the new alumni board president, and Margaret Sughrue Carlson (1983), who replaced Steve Roszell as executive director. (Roszell became executive director of the University of Minnesota Foundation with institutional oversight for Alumni Relations and Development.) Both Winton and Carlson were interested in boosting the profile of the organization as a political advocate.

Carlson came to the position with a Ph.D. in educational administration and public policy and a strong interest in legislative matters. She found a kindred spirit in Winton, who had a particular cause she wanted to pursue. "When I took the job and met with Penny," says Carlson, "she said to me, 'there's just one thing that I want to do this year. I want to change the regent selection process.'"

The process by which regents were selected had attracted a good deal of attention in the mid-'80s. Winton and others, including Governor Rudy Perpich, believed that the way candidates were picked had grown

far too political over the years. The best interests of the University too often took a backseat to the schmoozing interests of the legislative process.

But there remained a good deal of skepticism about the ability of the MAA to effect change and boost its profile in U of M political battles. There was also a lot of sensitivity within the organization about pursuing controversial matters, particularly given its financial relationship to the U, which at the time provided almost half the MAA budget.

Carlson, Winton, and others were undaunted, however, and some initial steps were taken to enhance the input of the MAA into University matters. A public policy committee was established and one of its first projects was to take an alumni poll on the issue of University investments in South Africa: *How did graduates feel about the University of Minnesota supporting apartheid?* Though the regents were less than enthusiastic when the MAA handed them the results – again, they questioned the legitimacy of the association representing alumni opinion – the MAA was unabashed and proceeded to conduct a second poll the following year. This one, which focused on athletics and financial aid, was also shrugged off by University regents. But the MAA was starting to assert itself.

Meanwhile, the regent selection process issue was simmering. The alumni association decided to create a task force to conduct a review of the process and recommend changes. Three former regents and a former governor were made a part of the committee, which helped give it an immediate weight in political circles. The panel recommended that the state create an ongoing Regent Candidate Advisory Council (RCAC), which would set criteria and help identify quality candidates. Legislation was drafted by alumni volunteers Tom Swain and John French (1955), and introduced in the 1987 session at the capitol. And there it sat, languishing in committee, through the spring and fall of that year.

But the alumni association was finding allies in its advocacy initiative. There was a growing sense with state leaders and the organization itself that a political

#### 1979

The MAA celebrated its 75th anniversary at the annual meeting at The Saint Paul Hotel. Steve Roszell was appointed executive director.

#### 1980

A drawing of a proposed alumni center on the East River Road Ramp site near Coffman Memorial Union was presented to University officials who agreed with the idea but disagreed over the site and parking issues.

#### 1983

The National Volunteer of the Year Award was created to recognize graduates who have made a significant contribution to the alumni association and the University.

#### 1985

Margaret Sughrue Carlson Ph.D. (1983), was named executive director of the MAA – the first woman to hold that position in the Big Ten.





Annual alumni celebration at Bierman Field Athletic Building, 1988  
© Jeffrey Grosscup

role was not only a legitimate function but important for the long-term stability of the University. While administrators, faculty, and students at any large university come and go, and legislators serve at the pleasure of their constituencies, alumni have a steadfast and enduring interest in alma mater. Political matters were often matters of expediency. The MAA stood for the University's interests through the long haul.

Recognition of this role was percolating within the University as well. President Kenneth Keller agreed to meet on a regularly scheduled basis with MAA officers and defended the organization when Stan Kegler (1950, '52, '58), chief lobbyist for the U, complained about the presence of alumni association volunteers at the statehouse in St. Paul. According to Carlson, Kegler said he didn't want alumni to create an "amateur night at the capitol." But times were changing, Keller told him, and the MAA could perform a valuable function for the University.

That function soon became apparent. In the winter of 1988, a crisis swept through the U when questions raised about a costly remodeling of the kitchen at Eastcliff, the president's official residence, escalated into a whole slew of troubles for the institution. The initial investigation led to a public scrutiny of University finances, a legislative audit, and, ultimately, President Keller's resignation.

Back at the state capitol, the MAA-sponsored bill to create the RCAC – still languishing in legislative committee – suddenly became hot again. It was brought to the floor in the spring of 1988 and passed both houses. Now the question became,

would this new council have a serious impact on the selection process?

In the words of alumni board member Steven Goldstein, "the hard work had just begun" for the MAA. The 24-member council was created, with 20 seats filled by people who had either direct or indirect ties to the alumni association. Their first task was to advise the legislature on four regent seats, which were to be filled by May 1989. The RCAC scoured the state for nominees and whittled a long list of candidates down to 16, which was presented to the legislature.

For a time it looked like some in the legislature would ignore these recommendations and invite their own candidates to apply for the board. Then one statehouse leader suggested the entire list be scrapped and the process started over again. Others hinted the alumni association should be happy if two of the RCAC's four prospective regents were ultimately accepted by the legislature.

But, 1988-89 alumni board president Kenneth "Chip" Glaser (1975) and others mobilized a campaign to validate the work of the RCAC. Supportive articles and editorials appeared in the St. Paul, Minneapolis, Wilmar, St. Cloud, and Grand Forks newspapers. More than 2,500 alumni wrote letters to the editors and numerous calls were made to legislators. The sentiment expressed to the lawmakers was the same: Don't ignore the hard work of this council.

In the end, all that hard work paid off. The new process was triumphant and all four of the vacant regents' seats were filled by nominees put forward by the RCAC. Not since the earliest days of the

association's history, during the battle with the Board of Control, had the MAA played such a powerful role in state politics. In just five years time, it had moved from being a wallflower in the selection process of University President Kenneth Keller to a genuine political force on campus and in the state legislature.

The organization would not look back. In the years to come, it would continue to play a fearless role in future controversies involving the University. In 1992, the MAA's Legislative Network helped restore to the University \$23 million in vetoed funding from the state. In 1995, when a bitter dispute erupted between the faculty and the Board of Regents over the regents' attempt at reforming tenure, 15 former alumni board presidents signed a letter to the regents urging them "to seek a sensible solution to this crisis." Even the *Washington Post* took up the issue, with a national slant, in an article headlined: "Minnesota Faculty, Regents Put Tenure to the Test." The article stated: "Alumni groups have petitioned the board to change it's mind, saying the university is being 'ripped apart' by the tenure debate."

In 1998, the Legislative Network again mobilized hundreds of volunteers for the "249" campaign, an effort to induce the state to provide \$249 million in funding for building projects. The final appropriation was \$206.8 million – the largest capital bonding appropriation ever.

And in numerous Athletics Department battles and controversies, which included the resignation and hiring of several athletics directors; the debacle over academic fraud among members of the men's basketball team; the unification of the men's and women's athletics departments; and the need for an on-campus football stadium, the alumni association felt no compunction about weighing in.

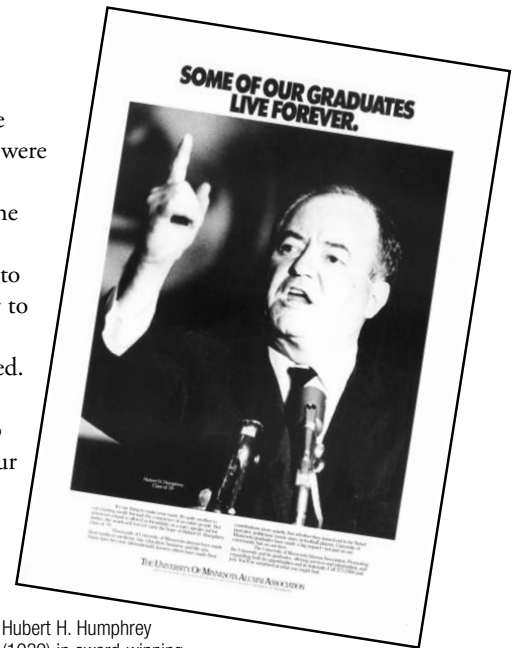
In a period of enormous change at the University – 1985 to the present – a time in which the U would see four presidents, Athletics Department turmoil, declines in state funding, and often tenuous relationships with the state's governors, the Minnesota Alumni Association served as a stellar advocate for the U, arguing consistently on behalf of the historic missions of the institution. Time and again, it was there to remind its constituents that the essential goals of the University were to provide the students of the state of Minnesota with the best possible public education, and to provide the state itself with all of the fruits that stem from a great hall of learning.

In the process, the MAA not only set a place for itself at the table, it also reestablished a time-honored role for alumni at the U. "Initially, many alumni didn't see the sort of advocacy we were pursuing as a right or a responsibility. Some even thought it was

dangerous," says Carlson. "But we believed that we were permanent stakeholders at the University. We looked back to our past in order to deal with the problems we faced. And today, there are very few who don't embrace our role as advocates for the U" – including the Board of Regents.

In 1994, informal discussions on

timely University issues were initiated between the alumni association and the regents. Called 3-by-3s, the meetings included three members of the Board of Regents and three representatives of the alumni association. Since 1997, these meetings have been held on a regular three-month basis, enhancing what was already an outstanding relationship.



Hubert H. Humphrey (1939) in award-winning advertising campaign University of Minnesota Alumni Association

## Spirit and Community

There were other opportunities for the alumni association to look back to its past in the mid- to late '80s.

The doldrums that afflicted the University in the late '60s had taken their toll on some of the traditions that had previously cheered graduates and brought them back to the campus. Homecoming celebrations had become something less than rousing, graduation ceremonies were more sparsely attended, and the annual meeting of alumni had become a small affair.

In addition, there was a feeling that the University had grown too large and sophisticated to sustain a general sense of spirit and community on campus. The idea of expressing a special bond with alma mater by wearing school colors seemed as quaint as donning letter sweaters and raccoon coats.

But beginning with the annual alumni meeting in 1986, the MAA started to revive some of the grand old functions of the organization. That year, an effort to boost attendance and invigorate the program resulted in a five-fold increase in attendance. A crowd of some 860 arrived at the Football Practice Facility to hear *Washington Post* syndicated columnist Art Buchwald deliver the keynote address.



Linda Mona, 1995-96 alumni board president, during 1995 visit to alumni chapters in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan  
*Linda and Dave Mona*

In subsequent years, speakers at the annual gathering included distinguished television journalists Walter Cronkite, Ted Koppel, and Leslie Stahl; writer and radio personality Garrison Keillor (1966); Colorado state congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (1961); playwright August Wilson; political advisers Mary Matalin and James Carville; and Minnesota political figures Vin Weber and Tim Penny. Not only has attendance at annual meetings boomed, the celebrations have rallied spirit and pride and helped affirm allegiance to the University.

They've also stimulated and charged their audiences.

August Wilson's talk was a provocative challenge to the University and its alumni to do more and do better by its students of color. Sue Bennett (1967, '81), alumni board president in 1990-91, had already begun to address these issues with a series of annual reports published in *Minnesota* magazine that detailed barriers to the recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty, and administrators.

Few of the 1,600 attendees who listened to Garrison Keillor's keynote address at the 1992 annual meeting could have left the banquet without having a greater appreciation for the extraordinary value the University of Minnesota brings to its home state. "I take fierce and unreasonable pride in being a product of Minnesota public education," he said at the outset of a speech that stands as one of the most eloquent statements of the value of a U of M education ever penned. He went on to say, "The University is one of the glories of this state and has been since territorial days. . . . It represents the great

intellectual aspirations of the people of this state, and it stands as a testament to the happy fact that a democratic society can encourage and enjoy excellence."

There were other measures that have boosted spirit. The association was instrumental in establishing Maroon and Gold Fridays on campus – a seemingly simple expedient that has become an important visual reminder of the University's presence in the community.

Sporting events have remained a central rallying ground for alumni all around the country. And there has been plenty to cheer about: several recent football bowl trips, back-to-back national championships for the men's hockey team, a first conference title for the women's volleyball team, two consecutive trips to the NCAA tournament for the women's basketball team, and two consecutive appearances at the NCAA Frozen Four for the women's hockey team. The alumni association has sponsored pep rallies, 'Sota Socials, and tailgate parties at many of these events, helping to boost team and alumni spirits.

In 1988, the association co-sponsored "Just One U," a weeklong homecoming celebration for the whole community, held in conjunction with the successful end of the Minnesota Campaign. Sponsorship of the annual homecoming breakfast was revived in 2000, restoring the luster to this old campus tradition. And a new homecoming event was initiated in 2003 – a scholarship auction, which continues the UMAA's 100-year tradition of supporting academic excellence.



## A Growing Organization

The increase of spirit activities has been a crucial component in the boosting of membership numbers. A string of goals were set and achieved in the 1990s, culminating in the cresting of the 50,000-member mark in 2000. Along with this accomplishment came a dedication to the sensibility that membership and membership numbers should not be an end in and of themselves. The true mission of the alumni association remained as it had always been: to support and serve the University and its alumni. While numbers might give some indication of the breadth of the association, its depth was best measured in the commitment to service of those members with Garrison Keillor's "fierce and unreasonable pride" in their University education.

In 1990, the alumni association underwent an ambitious reorganization and a name change. The Minnesota Alumni Association (MAA) officially became the University of Minnesota Alumni Association (UMAA). Administrative services were restructured by dividing its growing number of constituent organizations into categories: collegiate alumni societies, geographical chapters, and interest groups.

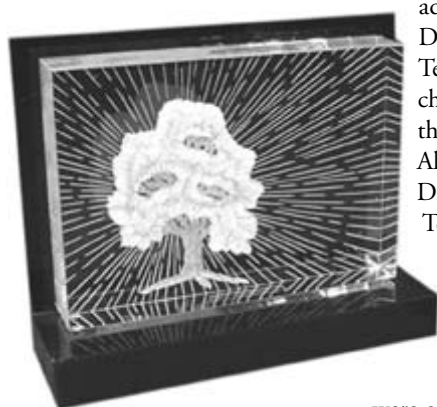
In response to the changing needs of a growing membership, a number of important programs were added to the association's offerings during the 1990s and early 2000s. Among them were a campus-wide Mentor Connection, which pairs alumni with current University students; lifelong learning programs through a strategic alliance with the College of Continuing Education; an extensive and informative Web site; and an Employment Expo to give students and graduates an opportunity to meet with representatives of local and national companies.

The alumni association and the University took over (from Amoco) the funding and

administration of the Distinguished Teaching Award and changed its name to the Horace T. Morse-Alumni Association Distinguished Teaching Award.

(Morse was the first dean of the General College.) Two student scholarship funds

were established – one based on need and the other on merit



Distinguished Teaching Award  
University of Minnesota Alumni Association



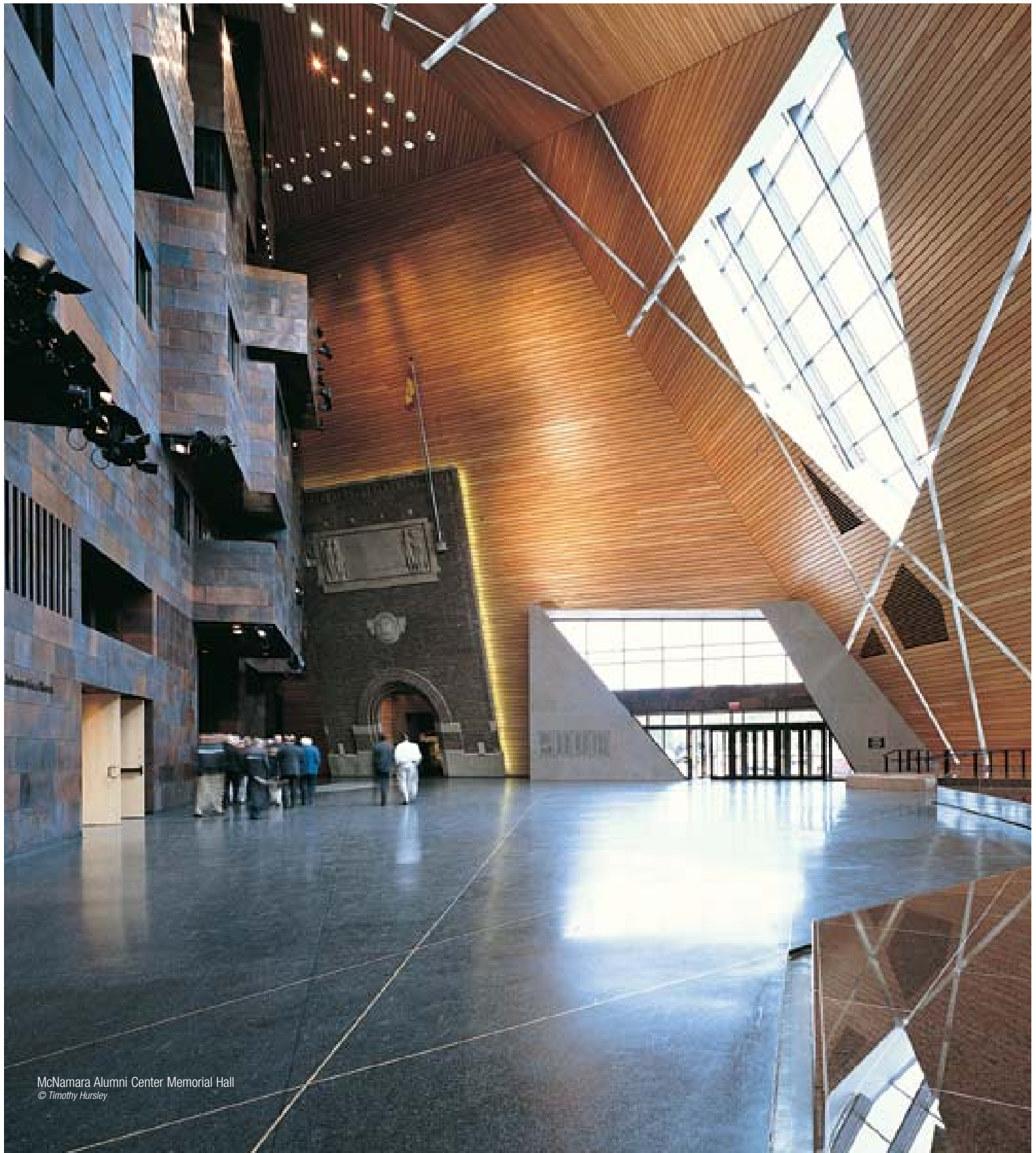
Dr. Endesha Ida Mae "Cat" Holland (1979) in "Changing the World...." advertising campaign  
University of Minnesota Alumni Association

In conjunction with benefit partners from both the University and business communities, the association also has provided many new membership rewards, including discounts on courses, car rentals, and career counseling services. In the mid-'90s, the First USA (Bank One) credit card was introduced to members as an affinity partner, providing a significant stream of revenue for the organization.

Two ad campaigns were instrumental in boosting support for the association. Beginning in 1986, "Some of Our Grads . . .," a newspaper campaign featuring renowned U of M alumni like Hubert Humphrey (1939) and Roy Wilkins (1923), was a finalist for the prestigious Clío Award from the advertising industry; and several years later, "Changing the World One Graduate at a Time" highlighted the achievements of a diverse group of graduates. Each campaign has served to remind readers of the remarkable stream of individuals who have not only earned their degrees from the University, but gone on to impact the wider world.

And after more than 100 years of publishing, *Minnesota* magazine remains one of the finest alumni publications in the land, providing more than 50,000 graduates with essential news of the University and its alumni. It maintains the tradition of "wide awake" journalism promised by its very first editor, E.B. Johnson, and is still, in the minds of many alumni, the single most important member benefit of the UMAA.





McNamara Alumni Center Memorial Hall  
© Timothy Hursley

## 1990

An ambitious reorganization plan streamlined the alumni association governance and volunteer structures. The name of the organization was officially changed to University of Minnesota Alumni Association (UMAA).

## 1992

Memorial Stadium, built in 1924, was demolished in the spring. The UMAA sponsored a commemoration ceremony and a sale of salvaged bricks. Proceeds netted more than \$52,000, which was donated to the University's general scholarship fund.

## 1995

The national alumni board made building The Gateway one of the UMAA's five-year goals and began planning for the financing, fund-raising, and architect selection. Another goal was to raise the membership to 50,000 by the year 2000.

## 1998

More than 2,600 Alumni Legislative Network volunteers were mobilized for the "249" campaign to support the University's request for \$249 million in state funding for building projects.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Gateway to the University

### *A Permanent Home*

For all its accomplishments, growth, and vibrancy, the UMAA remained an organization without a permanent home.

And there was a long list of past alumni board presidents, volunteers, and staff to remind current UMAA leaders that building an alumni center would be no easy task. A permanent home had been an organizational goal for decades, and still it remained a twinkle in the eye of UMAA dreamers.

The history of the project gave reason to doubt. Talk of an alumni center had begun as early as 1919 within the association, but nothing came of it. By the late 1950s, Ed Haislet was making the lack of a facility an annual lament in board meetings. It wasn't until 1965 that plans were finally made to build a center on the West Bank of the campus. These went nowhere fast. Six years later, a second building was discussed – one that would create a “gateway to the University,” including administrative offices, a hotel, and an office tower. It, too, died. Ten years after that, a third idea was proffered, and a drawing of a proposed riverfront alumni center was made, but the University didn't like its location and so it was back to the drawing board. In 1984-85, there was talk of linking an alumni center with the planned construction of the Weisman Art Museum, but the museum went it alone. And on and on.

Meanwhile, the cramped offices of the alumni association moved from Coffman Union in 1970 to exile in the Midway area of St. Paul, back to campus and Morrill Hall in 1979, and once more to Coffman Union in 1992.

Aside from UMAA office space needs, there were other pressing reasons to break ground on an alumni center. For one, there was no good place for special occasions. For another, having no place to call its own meant the UMAA was still, after all these years, something of an ethereal presence on campus.

“I remember one particularly embarrassing event,” says Fred Friswold (1958), who served as national alumni board president in 1987-88. “We had a donor

from Chicago who'd funded two chairs and we were going to honor him with a ceremony. They ended up having it in the corner hallway of Northrop Auditorium because there was no other place available. You had people giving a presentation with a terrazzo floor, plaster walls and ceilings, and the echoes of people walking down two hallways, and the sense was, is this the way to honor a \$2-million gift?”

“We didn't have any identity on campus,” says Larry Laukka (1958), alumni board president in 1994-95. “We were trying to grow the organization, trying to make a more significant impact on the institution, but we didn't have a home.”

Friswold and Laukka were old U of M fraternity brothers who, together, were instrumental in reviving the alumni center project during Friswold's administration. Early in the project, the duo produced encouraging but not conclusive results. In 1989, they helped convince the national UMAA board to consider a site for the proposed center at the intersection of Oak Street and Washington Avenue. A year after that, the University of Minnesota Foundation joined the effort to build a center, giving an enormous boost to the project's prospects. The same year, a committee of representatives from the alumni association, the University of Minnesota Foundation, and University Relations gave a name to the project: the Gateway Center. In 1992, as Memorial Stadium was being razed, the class of 1942 and the Board of Regents donated money to preserve the stadium arch for future use in the Gateway Center complex. The site of the old stadium would now be the site of a new alumni center, and the heart of the stadium could be an essential detail of the new building. The Gateway project was moving along, but still a long way from being bricks and mortar.

The same year that Laukka became alumni board president (1994), the Minnesota Medical Foundation joined with the University of Minnesota Foundation to become a partner in the Gateway project with the UMAA. Together the foundations added more impetus to the building project, particularly with their fund-raising capabilities.

#### 1999

The University of Minnesota Gateway was officially opened and renamed the McNamara Alumni Center to acknowledge the generosity of Richard “Pinky” McNamara (1956).

#### 2000

The UMAA hosted the grand opening of the McNamara Alumni Center, and the unveiling of the Heritage Gallery and Memorial Hall. More than 10,000 alumni, friends, and members of the University community attended the celebration events.

#### 2001

The first annual celebration to be held in the new McNamara Alumni Center was incorporated into the University's Sesquicentennial Grand Finale.

#### 2003

The UMAA passed a resolution to contribute \$1.5 million to scholarships and a new on-campus stadium complex as a lasting legacy and continuation of its 100-year tradition of supporting student scholarship and campus construction projects.

Another element that pushed things forward that year was a series of alumni board strategic planning sessions from which building the Gateway Center emerged as the focal point of UMAA activities. The public relations agency Mona, Meyer, McGrath & Gavin, had been asked by the UMAA to help the organization draft a list of goals for a strategic plan that would live beyond annual meetings and the necessities of day-to-day organizational planning. The agency's primary suggestion was that the association's list be kept to a minimum and be totally focused on the goals. A number of projects and ideas were discussed in subsequent planning meetings, including boosting membership, but the number-one priority that kept emerging from discussions turned out to be an alumni center on campus. All other goals would be enhanced by the building, including increased membership. "It was the old idea of 'Build it and they will come,'" says Carlson.

With solid partners and the Gateway project at the top of every UMAA to-do list, the plans for construction began to gather more steam. The addition of Dale Olseth (1952) to the project in 1994 was also crucial. Olseth had been a business colleague of Friswold's, had served as a trustee for the U of M Foundation, and was chair of its board during the successful Minnesota Campaign. He was a seasoned fund-raiser who immediately gave the project a great deal of credence in the gift-giving world.

An initial goal of \$7 million was established and a few donations in the six-figure range came in. After the

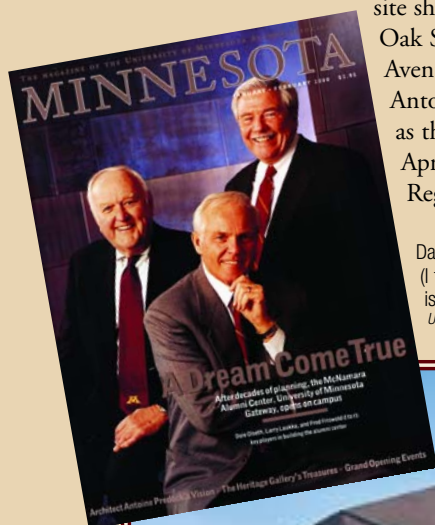
site shifted to the corner of Oak Street and University Avenue, renowned architect Antoine Predock was chosen as the building's designer. In April 1997, the Board of Regents approved the plans

and soon after decided to become tenants themselves. Fund-raising goals for the \$46-million building were revised upwards three times, with a substantial contribution coming from U of M alumnus Richard "Pinky" McNamara (1956), whose \$10-million gift to the University in the fall of 1998 included a portion designated to the alumni center.

The ground had been broken for the center in November 1997. For the next two years, as construction progressed on the building that would become the McNamara Alumni Center, it was difficult for some elderly observers of the alumni association to believe that what was going up on the former site of Memorial Stadium was not just some fever-driven mirage but genuine concrete and girders.

When the grand opening came in 2000, the center looked like a sparkling geode emerging from campus soil and marking the entrance to the University. Visitors stepped into a vast, 85-foot-high Memorial Hall lit by a wall of windows catching the eastern light. The ceiling above was a series of acute angles, which described the asymmetrical exterior facade and suggested the complexities of a course in geometry or engineering. A Heritage Gallery on the main floor helped suffuse the modern architecture with a feeling of the great traditions of the University's past. A huge "Wall of Books," with more than 5,000 works by alumni, students, and faculty of the University, gave a sense of the individual accomplishments of those who, through the decades, have strolled the nearby streets and walks.

Beyond the great hall, 198,800 square feet of office space would soon house more than a score of University-affiliated organizations. Outside, a beautiful Gateway Plaza would, in two years time, stretch toward Washington Avenue to the south.



Dale Olseth, Larry Laukka, and Fred Friswold (l to r) on cover of January-February 2000 issue of *Minnesota* magazine  
University of Minnesota Alumni Association

McNamara Alumni Center  
© Timothy Hursley





In the years since its completion, the McNamara Alumni Center has known nothing but activity. Aside from the daily business of the many offices, the building has been home to hundreds of meetings and events: public receptions, academic and award ceremonies, career fairs for alumni and students, and the UMAA's annual celebration.

Incorporated into the design of Memorial Hall is the 55-foot-tall Memorial Stadium arch, built of bricks taken from the original structure. Given an angle of its own, and linking the great hall to the Heritage Gallery, it leans into the open space at 15 degrees. Fixed in a permanent bow, the arch acknowledges all the good efforts, not just of this modern group of alumni but the thousands of alumni association members, friends, volunteers, and staff from years gone by who have done hard work on behalf of the University.

From its second floor offices, the University of Minnesota Alumni Association overlooks the happenings in Memorial Hall too. Finally ensconced in a home of its own, another bedrock component of the University of Minnesota, the UMAA shares its space with all those graduates who also have felt a timeless link to alma mater.

### *Into the Future*

"There was a zeal waiting to happen," says Margaret Carlson of the organization that she has led for almost 20 years. "There's no other way to describe it. And each success fostered a new enthusiasm, new ideas, and the sense that, 'Hey, we can do that too.'"

The zeal remains, and the new ideas keep coming but, at the same time, the UMAA continues to pursue the matters and issues that have animated the organization through its rich history.

Its advocacy initiative is apparent in the continued efforts of the UMAA's Legislative Network, which, in 2003, mobilized over 10,000 members to lobby state legislators on behalf of the University in a year of extraordinarily tight state budgeting. The year before, former UMAA board president Ann Huntrods (1976, '81) chaired the presidential search committee that named Robert Bruininks as the new U of M president.

At 102 years old and counting, *Minnesota* magazine remains the best single source of news and information about the University and its alumni. And spirit is alive and well in everything from homecoming breakfasts to the 2003 annual alumni gathering, a sold-out event at the newly renovated Coffman Memorial Union that kicked off the UMAA's 100th anniversary celebrations. *New York Times* best-selling author and former alumni association board president Harvey Mackay was the keynote speaker.

Perhaps most significantly, a campaign to bring football back "home" has begun. In its own grand tradition of shouldering big tasks, the University of Minnesota Alumni Association became one of the first U of M organizations to weigh in on the matter when, in 2002, its national board passed a resolution stating: "The UMAA believes that it is in the best interest of the University community to bring Gopher football back on campus." Then, in October 2003, the board unanimously passed a resolution to contribute \$2 million to a new on-campus stadium complex and student scholarships. One million dollars was earmarked for the stadium and \$500,000, with a matching University grant, for scholars.

It is through the undertaking of large jobs and small that the UMAA has become a great organization within a great institution. People like Henry Nachtrieb and E.B. Johnson would have had a hard time imagining the magnitude, diversity, and reach of both the association and the University in the new millennium, but they did have a profound sense of an alumni organization's basic mission. That first constitution, ratified on a January night in 1904, charged the new members of the General Alumni Association with two primary tasks: promoting the welfare of the University and stimulating the interest of all graduates of the U in "the doings of their Alma Mater."

Throughout its long history, the University of Minnesota Alumni Association has been faithful to these first goals. Whether it is building a grand stadium, calling a state legislator on behalf of the University, or simply pulling on a maroon and gold sweatshirt for a Friday at work, its members will no doubt remain faithful to these goals for another century to come.

Alumni board presidents, past and present, with past UMAA executive director Steve Roszell and executive director Margaret Sughrue Carlson (first row, second from right and far right) at 99th annual celebration, May 2003  
University of Minnesota Alumni Association





UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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