

Interview with Rob Piecach
Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity at NMU
11 April 1995

START OF INTERVIEW

Interviewer (I): Rob, when were you initiated into Lambda Chi?

Rob Piecach (RP): I was initiated in the fall of '92.

I: So you've been here for most of '90s really?

RP: Yes.

I: And you know a lot of people that have been here through the '90s and even into the 80s? Alright. How would you say Lambda Chi in the '90s compares with the chapter in the past years?

RP: From in the past years I see like, in the '80s basically it was a glorified drinking club. It was, lately we've come to the fact where it's a lot of social yet it's balanced with a lot of philanthropy and other aspects. Nationals has really got down on, you know cracked down on academics and the business aspect of the fraternity. So now we have a lot more closer contact with national. I know in the past they always sent consultants around, but now it seems like they're looking, they're going to, what am I trying to say? They're basically in closer contact with us. I see it shifting from mostly all social to business. It wouldn't surprise me if we ended up changing our name in the next five years to a business social fraternity as a classification. Another thing is, the Greek system isn't as thriving as before in the past, so membership is down all over in the Greek system. No longer is it the thing to be in. Well for the people in it, in the fraternity it's the place to be, but it's, for general people they don't see why be in the Greek system or Lambda Chi itself.

I: Yeah. How many active members are there in Lambda Chi right now?

RP: 27.

I: How many, if you can remember, what was your largest participating membership since you've been in?

RP: I think when I was initiated there was like 34.

I: 34?

RP: I'll ask Spencer if that's what our roster stood at.

I: How would you say, wait...what are your fondest memories of the fraternity?

RP: My fondest memory was when I went through the whole health week aspect, coming together as a class and ritual, you know its ritual it's one of the greatest things. You know its ideal basically to live by. Another thing is, with the alumni members, the 25th anniversary of our chapter here was just unbelievable. It was one of the greatest weekends of the fraternal experience. Just like all the members coming back, and hanging out being bros, automatically knowing you have something in common with them.

I: Yeah.

RP: Seeing them and you know they're brothers of our chapter. I mean you can say that for general fraternity as well, but like here it's something special. They're brothers at Northern Michigan University, they all went through basically the same thing. Times may have changed but basically it's the same thing. I think 25th anniversary and ritual, my first ritual when I was going through.

I: You have any stories you'd like to tell? Anything that really sticks out in your mind about that experience? Especially the 25th anniversary.

RP: The 25th anniversary I got to talk with Milo one night for about an hour. One thing that amazed me, when he decided to take this fraternity to the national level from a local level one of the members said, I think this was a direct quote from Milo, he was the "cancer of this fraternity."

I: Milo was?

RP: Yeah.

I: Wow.

RP: It just took me by shock, because all the stuff that Milo did you know getting this fraternity started on a national level and stuff like that, I just found it out that there was even conflict because the 25th anniversary year was not one of our best years. I mean it was year of conflict basically, everybody was fighting and when it came back, like 25th anniversary all the bros came back and it was just like the greatest thing like how the fraternity was supposed to be. Just like Friday night just like waiting for all the alumni to come in, all the alumni were coming in, we had like food and stuff at the house. They came into town and finally when everyone showed up we all went out to the bars like everyone went to the 3rd Base. There must have been like 60 or 70 Lambda Chi's in the 3rd Base all crammed in there. We drank there for a while, we went back to the house, stayed there for a bit, waited for a little more alumni. Finally they showed up and we went down to Remies and Milo put his gold card down on the bar and said "a round for everyone" for like 70 people, it must have been a fortune.

I: Wow!

RP: It's kinda funny, we were all drunk or drunk and they're all singing the cheer, we started singing the cheer right in Remies. It was pretty wild, people jumping all over the place. Then the

next following morning, which was kinda cool it was like the morning after. We woke up and we had an exemplification of the ritual. And basically we put Milo through and Milo, you know we used him as the participant and Milo was astounded because he never, he was initiated of Lambda Chi Alpha but he never was put through here. He was put through like at some other university. I forget what university.

I: I think it was University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

RP: Yeah I think that's where it was.

I: Yeah because they brought us through.

RP: I know they installed us so he was never put through here and it was really special basically. I just remember he was all happy about that, he thought it was the greatest thing. Which it was, it was excellent we did a good job. Yeah that weekend was unbelievable.

I: Just all around good time huh?

RP: Then Matt Cromer's speech, if you ever get a chance to talk to him he knows a lot about the fraternity. He was around and he's quadriplegic now.

I: Oh yeah.

RP: He was in town for a while, in Marquette for a while. He's a good symbol of the brotherhood we have here, because when he was in town and needed help, he was getting surgeries like every other week or something to deal with his condition and like all the brothers helped out. We went and visited him at the hospital and stuff. I thought that was really great, he's a good guy he can tell you some stories. And he gave a speech at that White Rose and it was, it brought a lot of brothers to tears and it was really emotional. Basically on how to you know just live life and don't always assume there's a tomorrow kind of thing. So it was really inspirational.

I: Cool. Another question. How much do you know about the fraternity's history?

RP: Not all that much. I know we were installed in like '69, or November 16th '68. We were Alpha Kappa I think Omega, I don't know. I know that. I know we've been around for 27 years as of right now and like a lot of the people, at White Rose I talked with a lot of people just how it was. As for like I knew there was house on Ohio, their old house when we were local. Just basic stuff, I don't know all the nooks and crannies.

I: There's not a lot there. What led you to join Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity?

RP: I don't know, I came up to school my freshman year, my suite mate was John Cavena [spelled phonetically] almost current Alpha and he brought me around the house and stuff. I never considered joining a fraternity. I remember like in high school, or summer orientation I came here and I'd seen a couple fraternities at summer orientation and was like 'naw I'm not join, I have no need to join a fraternity.' Then I started coming around it seemed like a lot of the

brotherhood, there it's special. It's kind of like a home away from home aspect. You come into this house, a lot of people don't understand this like girlfriends and stuff they don't really understand this because when they're around people aren't really their selves so to speak. When you come into this house you can be whatever, you are yourself. You don't have to act proper if you don't want to, be whatever. Not be whatever you want to be, but be yourself. I'd seen that when I came in here like when I rushed it seemed like just the place man, like home you know. That's why I kind of like our house too. It's not like one of those big university buildings you see at other universities. It's like an actual house and it's just cool.

I: _____ power.

RP: Just like a home away from home I'd seen it as. And then when I went through, another aspect of it was ideal way to live a life, kind of like church. Which we are a Christian based fraternity which is you know Catholics. I just found like basically what led me to join was John bringing me around and seeing all the brothers, how they stood up for another and kind of thought of each other as family.

I: Just one more question. Taking a long look at Lambda Chi's history, where would you say the '90s fits in?

RP: The 90s...

I: I know it's hard to believe we're already halfway through but.

RP: I know you said the '90s was like, man I came here in fall of '92 and it's like 'we got tons of time dude the 2000s are in forever.' I don't know the '90s were kinda stagnant there for a while, we started off slowly. '91 we won the Phoenix Award which basically the Phoenix Award is awarded to those chapters that were down to nothing and built themselves back up again. '91 I guess we were a thriving fraternity and '92 came around and we just dropped off. So like the better half of this century so far we've been kind of fighting fires rebuilding like the in the past like I said we were always having something to put out you know. We're spending all of our times fighting fires and not really being a fraternity, we're trying to extinguish the problem. Now I see it going to the next step up. I see it being a thriving chapter where we're going to be living through the chapters Nationals Chapter Excellency Guidelines. I see us being one of the good chapters in the Midwest. Which is really amazing to me because when I got here were were probably one of the worst. But as for like the '90s, you see the '60s, late '60s we were founded, '70s kind of like party here man. I talked to some of those guys who just bashed. Then the '80s, the '80s were weird, we we're kind of rebuilding. Still partied, glorified drinking club. The '90s I just see as, it's still fun. That's basically how we got our, turned around and we became still a fun fraternity but as for when people look back and see the '90s I hope they say "That's when they turned their shit around and basically got going again and started doing something" basically I'd seen in years past where we hadn't done anything. We're doing a lot of good philanthropy events, like Puck Hunts started out in the '90s well '89 so basically it matured in the '90s so to speak. 3 on 3 basketball tournament I see as being a traditional.

I: Lambda Jam.

RP: Lambda Jam, started that tradition out. I also see the '90s for this fraternity getting back to their older ways. Like really believing in the bound of brotherhood because I see that happen a lot when I first got here, it was kind of shaky. I don't know if it was just with the individuals that have graduated or what, but I see brotherhood really coming back. When I look back on, I will probably look back on the '90s and see what the newer guys take it from here, hopefully I'll see just we're starting to kick ass trying to make the Greek system. I think us and with Delta Chi's here, I think we're going to bring back the Greek system to Northern, I hope that's going to be our golden niche. And time, because the Greek system is suffering here.

I: What would you say is the reason that the Greek system is suffering? Would you say its administration, do you think that there's problems with administration here at Northern as far as being too harsh with the fraternities? Not giving them enough leeway? Not working with us enough? Or would you say it's the all-around atmosphere and the students?

RP: I don't know, in years past we haven't gotten the support from the administration that we've like to. But I guess its part our fault too, if you kind of look at it, because we haven't really done, before in the past we haven't done nothing to support the Greek system. So everybody just had the outlook of you're just buying your friends. Why would you join the fraternity when you can go to the parties and stuff? But it goes both ways, like the administration has not given us support at all. They were just, when Casperik [spelled phonetically] was alpha in '92 my first year, '92-'93 academic year, we were basically targeted or Tim Scout, alpha and president. Basically they were trying to target us to kick us off campus. Which I kind of like find amazing because we're the only ones still around, we surrounded the so called "Jamrich Administration."

I: The black years.

RP: They got every fraternity but ours.

I: Yeah.

RP: Yeah it's partly the administration's fault and partly the students because the students really don't know what the Greek system is, and that's in turn out fault. So if we'd just educate the students on how great the Greek system can be. I think there's a stat, 80% of all senators were Greek. I forget how many percent of our presidents, but a good majority were Greek. People soon realize that is kind of it, I don't know it's, kind of it builds you basically. We've just got to communicate that to everyone, including the public and the administration. I see progress being made right now in the administration with Bonzel [spelled phonetically] basically getting appointed to Greek Affairs I think is what his title is.

I: Yeah.

RP: But then again I see him as a puppet. Everyone knows he don't control nothing and Niemi's really looking toward to Greek system, and Niemi does not like the Greek system. In my opinion, I don't know that for fact but I've seen certain aspects that he's displayed that he don't like the Greek system and stuff like that. It's just, I think as everyone become more educated

towards fraternities and sororities in general we will see a lot more participation. Like say we rushed Joel last semester and he's a commuter, he's from Negaunee. I figure, like for being in the atmosphere that we are, being a lot of nontraditional, a lot of commuter students, this would offer them a great place to spend time on campus.

I: Yeah.

RP: Because we don't always want to be at home. And meet new people, I mean when you're commuting you already have your friends from high school but why limit yourself? You can meet a lot of interesting people, especially within a fraternity. You know a national fraternity you have the chance maybe to go to a conclave or seminar or something. Meet bros from all over the country and another thing, being Greek is just...All my friends back home that went to different colleges, we're all in different fraternities. I was like, when I got initiated you know I was like, 'I didn't really talk to my friends. They went to college and I know some of them joined fraternities I wonder if I'm brothers with anyone now.' They weren't, but it's still that kind of understanding of being Greek and they know what it's like. I was thinking about it, because it's nearing graduation in a year and a half hopefully, I was like I wonder what I'd had did with my college career if I wasn't in a fraternity? I mean yeah it takes a lot of time, but it teaches you how to balance your time. It really benefits you in the future. I don't know, I hope things will change. Like we were saying, Phi Tau is about to come back, Sig Ups are trying to get a chapter up here, start a colony. One more, I think a black fraternity's trying to come on campus which would be good because I know at other colleges black fraternities are really strong and it would just benefit us all.

I: Do you have any closing comments? Anything you would like to say?

RP: No, I just think that it's a good thing that you're doing because I'd like to learn more about our past history at this chapter and let others know that, about our history like 20 years down the road they'll look at the '90s like oh my god you know. Like how we do at the '70s or late '60s. So I'm just glad we're starting to get the history down so we have something concrete to look at when we come back and look at all the stupid stuff we did.

I: Yeah, a lot of it there.

RP: A lot of stupid stuff, it's kind of funny. In closing, other closing comments. Hopefully the bed will still be around. They were around when we colonized.

I: Alright, thanks a lot Rob.

END OF INTERVIEW.