

Today is Thursday, February 28, 2019 and we are on the University of Mississippi Campus. My name is Claire Francis and we are conducting this interview to document and preserve the Theta legacy on the Ole Miss Campus.

1. Can you state your name for the record? **My name is Paige Romoser.**
2. When were you born? I was born January 9, 1996.
3. Where were you born? I was born in a suburb of Chicago called Gray Lake (?)
4. Where did you grow up? What other places have you lived? **I was born in Chicago and soon after we moved to California – Pasadena, California. Then we moved to New York. Then we moved back to California – like, the Orange County area. Then I moved to Arkansas and then I lived in Connecticut.**
5. I didn't realize you had moved so much – how come? **We never lived anywhere more than like 2 or 3 years. My mom's job moved us around a lot. She ended up going to work in the head office in New York for Pepsi, but she had to do a lot of moving around in order to get back there.**
6. What was your high school experience like? Can you share some stories or anecdotes? **High school, I guess for me, was pretty typical – the big thing at my high school is we are a pretty well-ranked high school in the nation, so it's a very competitive school. So that's something that a lot of people don't see – it's competitive among the parents, competitive among the students, so that is like a big thing. You're always trying to compete against each other with grades and stuff, which was a huge issue. It turned into like blame issues within my high school. Other than that, you know, I had like the normal high school experience – like, you know? Girls are catty with each other and have drama, but you kind of just find your way through. I don't know if I have any good stories – I mean, the big story that I always tell people is that when I officially accepted going to Ole Miss, I was like shunned. It's not considered a good school – like people don't leave the New England area, and if they do, they go to California, they go to Ohio, or they go to Vanderbilt. And that's like it. So going to Ole Miss was like – people thought I was dumb because I couldn't get in anywhere else or something like that. And that's why I ended up going to Ole Miss because that was like the rumor about it. So that's a big part of my town's dynamic in that aspect.**
7. Why did you choose Ole Miss? I really liked the Southern school experience. So when I lived in Arkansas, we used to go to the Arkansas games every single weekend, and I loved the big SEC football experience, and so I wanted to go back to the SEC. I applied for a lot of schools up north, and I toured probably thirty schools altogether, and I just didn't like any of them as much as I liked the Southern schools.
8. Did your parents attend Ole Miss? **No**
9. Where else did you apply to college? **I applied to Alabama, Auburn, Miami of Ohio, LSU, Ohio State, University of Connecticut, Boston University, and Tennessee. It was a requirement – you had to apply to ten schools at my high school. Once I got into Ole Miss, I didn't apply to anything else.**
10. What did you know about Greek life before coming to Ole Miss? **I honestly didn't know a lot about Greek life. The lady who was my college counselor was a sorority member at Georgia, and so she kind of had given me some insight but it wasn't anything I really**

knew. I knew Greek life was big in Southern schools, and I was going to rush in the fall – but other than that, I had no idea what I was coming into. I kind of knew the stereotypes from the movies – the big houses and all that stuff, but other than that I knew very little about Greek life. I knew I definitely wanted to be a part of it. A couple of people in my family have been in Greek life, so I knew I wanted to do it, especially going so far away from home – I knew it'd be a way to make friends and interact with people. I pledged in 2014.

11. **What was your recruitment experience like?** It was a complete shock at first to be completely honest. That first round where they open the doors and all come out screaming at you is a very weird experience. But I didn't feel that it was all that bad – like, I think things didn't go the way I wanted them to as I started getting an idea of what houses I liked and stuff, but I came in pretty open-minded, so I think overall the recruitment experience for me was not horrible on that side of things.
12. **What was your average day like as a Theta? Can you walk us through a day in your life?** Honestly, I spent a pretty good amount of time at the Theta house, especially like my freshman and sophomore year because a lot of my friends lived in the house those years. My big lived in the house my freshman year. So usually, any time I had free time in between classes, I'd go to the house and study. I had lunch there freshman year almost every day, especially because I lived in Crosby so all I had to do was walk up the steps to go to lunch. I spent a lot of time there, so for me, it was basically I was in my dorm, in class, or at Theta for my freshman and sophomore year and then I started kind of gearing away from Theta. I still went to lunch and stuff my junior and senior year, but I started to not have as many classes close by or not be on campus as much and stuff like that.
13. **What is the mission of theta?** Theta's big thing is leading women and creating women that are here to better society and lead other women and be able to be leaders themselves and create other leaders, and I think that's a huge thing Theta pushes on us is to grow amongst ourselves and grow as leading women. That's the big thing that they push on us a lot. So I think that's their big mission is to create great women that can do great things.
14. **Why did you choose to join?** Two of my aunts are Thetas – they were Thetas at Ohio State, so I do have legacy status technically at Theta. So that was a big push for me when I ended up having Theta and ADPi as my pref round options. I chose Theta because of the legacy factor, but also I did feel a connection there. Our big thing is that the girl who greets you on pref night is someone you've talked to earlier on, so the girl and I had had a great conversation and she picked me up and it made me feel really at home that she remembered everything we talked about and all that stuff. So that was a big push for me, because at my other pref round it was not like that for me.
15. **What does theta mean to you?** When I was on campus, I probably wouldn't have had this answer, but after leaving campus Theta has had a huge impact on me. It's brought me closer to my aunts, who live all the way out in California. It really means like great friendships for me – the lady I work for now is a Theta alumna from Ole Miss, and we're good friends because of it – that's how she found me was through alumni stuff, and it's connected me with so many people. It just has really meant a lot to me to have so many

people that I've been able to meet and, you know, so many new things I've been able to learn and stuff like that.

16. Can you tell us about your philanthropy? Our philanthropy is CASA, which is a Court-Appointed Special Advocate. So basically kids that are going through court-related things – usually it's for stuff that's where they're in foster care, or they're not with their parents – they can't have someone there to represent them, so their CASA becomes the person that is there for them. So they go to court with them, they do school stuff with them, basically it's almost like their adopted parent. And so that's what they do, is they're there for them throughout any processes that they may need to go through in any legal situation or school stuff, they just basically become the parent at that time.
17. Can you tell us about other events, programs, or activities you sponsor or host? We have Theta Encore in the fall. That's our highest-grossing event – and it's the second-grossing event behind Ole Miss football in the fall. In the spring, we did different things. So we did KATs and Dogs, which is where we brought animals from the Humane Society out to Business Row and handed out scantrons and stuff – it was usually close to midterms week or finals week. So we would hand out Scantrons and let people play with dogs and stuff, and that would benefit the Humane Society in Oxford. And then we had a bunch of different philanthropy events for CASA – we were trying to switch it up and find new stuff. So we had the Theta Carnival this last year, and then the year before that was Pops for a Purpose, where we did popsicles for sale. So we were kind of trying to find something that was going to “stick” – something that wasn't going to outshine Theta Encore, but was going to stick, and we weren't really getting there, so we were trying a bunch of new different things in the spring time.
18. What do you think were the challenges to recruitment? I think our biggest challenge was maintaining our excitement and enthusiasm throughout [recruitment] week, as we had girls coming into the house and just trying to maintain...overall, we don't have the funding that a lot of the other chapters on campus have and so we don't have the positive reaction from a lot of girls that other chapters have. So it's really hard. We'd have girls come in to recruitment and they wouldn't talk to us – like, they would just stare at us. They wouldn't even make an effort to talk to us, and they made it clear that they didn't really want to be there. And it's hard – that was one of the hardest things, was, you know, when you get girls like that it makes it so hard for us to want to keep going. And it's sad that we got those more often than not, especially on Greek Day, with all those girls. We will try to talk to you, and it's a 30-minute conversation you're having – it's not that hard to just pretend to be nice. But that was the hardest thing, was that girls start to feel discouraged after people would act like that to them, or they would tell you, “mmm, your house just isn't as good as this house,” or something – like they're pretty upfront with you about how they feel, and it definitely was super hard for us in that aspect.
19. Was there a prior indication that you could lose your charter or was it sprung on you?? So my junior year (2016-2017), nationals had come in and talked to us and basically told us, you know, “hey, we're seeing some problems here, we're gonna put you on review.” And it was just like, random ladies from nationals...it wasn't anyone ultra-important that came from nationals, but they were people that were voicing opinions from nationals,

basically telling us “you guys are under review right now.” It was mainly for grades – we weren’t hitting the all-sorority average, which is a requirement by Theta nationals. So they put us under review for a semester, and then they said, “you’re good, your grades went up, everything’s great,” and we didn’t really hear anything else from them. You know, we had people come into the house, and they helped us change some things that may have had issues, but it wasn’t like “this is dire.” And then, they got the email that the President and Vice President of Theta nationals were going to come in. They talked to them, and they needed to present a plan – a five-year plan or something like that of what we were going to do to better our chapter. And so they sent them like a 40-page plan that they gave to the president. The whole advising team did it as well as all of our executive board. And they presented it in front of the whole chapter to the president and vice president, and basically two days later, they were like, “sorry, we’re shutting your chapter down.” So they really didn’t even take into account the whole plan that they had come up with. At all. They [Ole Miss Theta exec] kind of found out the vote had happened before that, and their minds had kinda been made up, and so it was kind of a slap in the face. People thought it was possible that it would happen, but then people were like “no, we’re gonna figure it out with this plan, we give Theta so much money towards CASA,” and stuff like that – but their minds had already been made up beforehand.

How did the women react? I think it was really shocking for most of us. We knew that our numbers weren’t great recruitment wise – they hadn’t been for the past couple of years, but our biggest issue was that they weren’t helping us do better. They had kind of just left us in the dark, nationally. And so it was really hard for us to do well in recruitment when we weren’t being supported nationally, so there was aggressive backlash towards nationals. I think there still is – like, people have called for the resignation of the national president, and they want clear evidence on why we’ve been shut down. So our chapter had a lot of backlash towards nationals, and there was a lot of petitioning towards nationals. People really wanted this to get overturned. And in the end they were like, “sorry, the Grand Council decision is final, there’s not anything you can do about it.” So people were really proactive in their anger and their being upset and stuff. Yeah, they posted on Facebook, but they also did a lot of proactive things to kind of see if they could overturn this. I think it’s really amazing how much people kind of came together and were proactive about the whole thing.

20. **Is there anything else you’d like to add?** Honestly, when I first started Theta I didn’t know if I even wanted to stay around. I considered dropping, I didn’t really know anyone, I wasn’t getting along with many people, but in the end I’m very happy that I stuck around. I am really proud to be a Theta at the Ole Miss chapter, I’m proud of every girl that was in that chapter or had been in that chapter; I cannot say that I’m proud to be a national Theta alumni, because I think that they did handle things incorrectly with our chapter and with the Clemson chapter. But I am really, really proud to be a Theta at Ole Miss and I am proud of every girl that’s ever been there.