

Origin of Oregon's Victory Bell Found Hidden in Deep Mystery

By JIM WALLACE

As Oregon's famed green and lemon victory bell was being carried from Multnomah stadium last Saturday after the Oregon Texas-clash the sportscaster who had been broadcasting the game remarked that although the victory bell was one of the best known landmarks of the Webfoot campus no one seemed to know where the bell had come from or when it came to the Oregon campus.

It seems that the radio announcer possessed as much information concerning the bell as the average person on the campus. Practically all of the "old timers" who were questioned agreed that the bell had been around a long time but assumed blank expression when queried about the bell's origin.

Firemen Forget

The first attempt to trace the history of the bell was made in 1939. Under the direction of Jack Bryant of the Emerald, several reporters spent an entire week chasing down leads concerning the bell. The sum total of their efforts was the establishing of the fact that the bell came to the campus some time between 1930 and 1935.

Someone said the bell had been a gift of the local fire department but none of the smoke-chasers remembered donating it. Someone else said it had been stolen from a rural school near Springfield. Another person volunteered the information that it was obtained from a country church that had burned down.

Another Possibility

Another interesting but unverified explanation was that it had come from an historic train that had once been in Portland. Dean George Turnbull of the journalism school thought it had been dragged from the basement of Villard hall. But no one knew for sure.

Then two weeks later Bill Kirtley, for many years caretaker of Mac court, brought forth the "authentic" story of the victory bell. He said that it had been purchased from a junk company in 1933 by the rally committee.

Helped Paint

Bill added that he had helped paint the iron bell in Mac court and that the bell was first used at the Oregon-OSC game that year in Portland. He pointed out that this first appearance of the bell was a most auspicious one as the Webfoots downed a highly-touted OSC squad.

Everyone was contented. The mystery of the victory bell had been solved. That is for about two weeks it was solved.

Theory Exploded

Two weeks after the story of the bell was published Gib Schnitzer of the Alaska Junk company said that Aaron Frank had bought a bronze bell to be given to the winner of the UO-OSC game. He maintained that this couldn't be the same bell that Kirtley had told about because if it were presented to the winner, it would have been impossible to paint it before the game. Furthermore, this bell was a bronze one and Kirtley said that he had painted an iron one.

This started a game of bell, bell, who's got the bell. Evidently there were two victory bells . . . but no one had ever seen more than one at a time. In the course of the argument it developed there were various other bells about the campus.

Sigma Chis, Too

The Sigma Chis had a victory bell, too. But they said they had stolen it from OSC in 1914 and that they had been forced to leave it in the basement of a Portland alum in 1926.

Then it was the Pi Kaps. Yes,

they had a bell but they insisted it had been purchased from a logging company near Coos Bay, and that it was no relative of the missing victory bell.

Busy, Anyhow

Thus things stood for several years. Even if no one knew which bell was being rung at athletic contests, no one would doubt that it was leading an eventful life.

The Idaho football team once succeeded in putting the bell in the equipment trunk and taking it as far as Portland before it was missed. Immediately the Webfoots went to rescue their symbol of victory.

The bell was located by a drayman who noticed an unusually heavy trunk among the Idaho equipment and with the help of the Portland police the bell was returned to Eugene.

Left at Stadium

Another time the bell was left on Multnomah field after a game with California and the Oregon squad had to put in a return appearance after the game to rescue it from the Cal gridders.

The bell has traditionally been in the custody of the president of the Order of the "O" who keeps it at his house. In 1941 when Jim Rathbun was "O" prexy the bell was spirited from the Beta house and an anonymous note was delivered from Corvallis saying it had been hidden on the OSC campus.

Found on Roof

But as things turned out the bell was much closer to home. Rathbun had found it on the roof of the ATO house and with the help of some other lettermen had brought it back to the Beta house and buried it in the sawdust bin.

The wartime history of the bell, although somewhat obscured, is perhaps the most interesting chapter of the story. It seems that in a scrap drive in 1943 someone loaded the victory bell onto a flat-car and headed it on its way to the smelter.

DUs Rescue

At Corvallis the Beaver discovered the bell, unloaded it, and boasted that at last they had the Oregon victory bell. Then a group of Oregon DUs went north and recovered the bell without recouring to ransom. They brought it back to Eugene and kept it in the attic of the DU house.

Then the bell was moved to the DU backyard where it stayed until neighbors objected because ev-

ery time anyone went near the bell they would ring it.

At Pi Phi House

The bell next appeared at the Pi Phi house but no one knew how it had been brought there. Rumor had it that for a time between the DU back yard and the Pi Phi basement the bell was hidden in Hendricks park.

After most of them men left the campus for the service, the bell had a military guard rather than the traditional Order of the "O." Last year the rally squad kept it but now it has been returned to the "O" men under the leadership of Ed Dick.

And that's the story of the bell. At various times there have been four victory bells on the campus. No one knows which of the four is now being used or who has the other three. Perhaps some reader can offer an explanation to the bell mystery.

CAMPUS CALENDAR

The University group of the First Christian church will meet in the YMCA lounge at 6 p.m. Sunday.

Sports Staff:

Eddie Artzt
Fred Taylor
Don Fair
Elwin Paxson
George Skorney
Dick Mace
Helen Sherman
Bill Stratton

Night Staff:

Jo Rawlins, night editor
Susan McCarrel
Roy Williams
Bob Hemingway
Ralph Parker
Carolyn Withycombe

Advertising Staff:

Day Manager:

Al Ruedy

Layout Staff:

Nickie Nicholl
Sherry Hawk
K. Lindberg
Deno Vichas

Solicitors:

Sally Schilling
George Melvin
Bob Bechtle

Picture Schedule

October 6: Phi Kappa Alpha, Sherry Ross.

October 7: Sederstrom hall, Sigma hall.

Radio Enthusiasts To Tryout Sunday

Tryouts for the opening Radio Workshop drama to be broadcast next Thursday, will be held in the

University extension studios from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Student Program Manager John MacDonald requests all those who participated last year to attend. Any new students in radio or drama are urged to audition.

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