

A Few Recollections . . .

Honored Millrace Memories Return From Good Old Days

(The following feature on the millrace was written by an Oregon alum now working for the Denver Post. The article originally appeared in the Emerald on Nov. 19, 1949, and is being reprinted at this time because of its special significance on Junior Weekend.)

By **BOB TWEDELL**

Just about fifteen years ago, the Junior Weekend publicity committee received the following message:

"Congratulations on the happy selection of the 'Melody In Spring' theme for Oregon's Water Pageant. It should be very beautiful.

"I am happy to extend my best wishes for the success of the event . . . Would you like some sort of a Hollywood token for the young lady who does a good job on one of the floats?"

The letter was signed by Bing Crosby. Bing was referring to plans for a Crosby-donated prize to be awarded to the coed chairman of the winning float in the canoe pageant.

"That's just a sample of the fame of Eugene's old millrace.

Alum Remembers

More recently, an Oregon alumnus wrote from his home in Japan about the "days I enjoyed canoeing along the millrace."

So it goes. Old-timers—Eugeneans and Oregon alumna 'round the world—remember the placid old stream of the days when it was the center of innumerable leisure-time activities. They fondly recall the picnics, the canoeing, the dunkings, the tugs-of-war, the swimming parties—and the romancing.

They remember much more that makes the millrace mean something special. They remember when the millrace waters turned the big water-wheels that supplied power for Eugene's industrial plants.

They remember when the circus came to town, and the elephants went bathing in the race. The big animals liked it—liked it so well that they staged a sit-down strike when their keepers tried to get them out.

Race Causes Feud

The old-timers remember when the millrace was the center of feuding among home-owners along its banks and the millrace-power owners. The men interested in developing the power potential wanted to widen the race; the people living along the race fought successfully to keep industrial development from destroying their carefully-nurtured, beautiful lawns and gardens—and so the scenic charms of the old stream were preserved a while longer.

And it doesn't require such a long memory to recall the famous "war" fought in and around the millrace in 1937. Loyal Ducks fought a victorious battle against

an invading horde of Oregon State Beavers. The Beavers, light-headed from a gridiron victory over the Ducks, descended on the Oregon campus to add insult to injury by taunting their victims with a victory parade.

The ill-planned affair ended in a disastrous defeat for the Corvallisites. Most of the Beavers ended up in the millrace, tossed there by Order of the O men and re-enforcements from the rest of the student body. Even the girls got into the fray; a crowd of them watched, "eyes filled with sadistic ecstasy" while captured Beavers were unceremoniously disrobed and thrown into the chilly waters of the race.

Other persons remember other things about the old millstream. They remember how the moonlight glistened on the water and the stars were reflected from the limpid, black pools. They remember the shadowy places along the banks, where the willows and ferns hung down to form inviting rendezvous for canoers. They recall the soft swish of paddles, the plink-plunk of ukeles and guitars, the joyous and sometimes raucous voices of impromptu choral groups.

Sad Days for Race

And they remember, too, the sad days when the race became a dirty trash-filled ditch, neglected and forgotten. Days that began when the Willamette flooded and broke the retaining wall and intake dam. Days that stretched into months and years.

It's not so easy for newcomers to Eugene, or to the University, to think about the millrace as do those who saw it "when." It's not so easy, now, for them to appreciate what the millrace means. It's hard for them to understand the glamour and romance that is connected with the beautiful old stream.

But now that the millrace has been restored, the come-latelys will have a chance to learn about the old stream's charms. And they, too, will probably become members of the legion of millracers.

Flow on forever, old millstream!

Junior Weekend Special

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