

Weather, War Fail to Halt Annual Fete

BY PAT TREECE
Emerald Feature Editor

Junior Weekend has been called "the University's greatest show" and if it is, by far its most spectacular act is the Canoe Fete.

"Drifting and Dreaming," this year's fete, will follow in the footsteps of a gala and colorful tradition that stretches over more than a quarter of a century.

Started in '15

Since 1915 students have worried and slaved to build better and more fantastic floats, with the exception of the 14 years from 1941 to 1954 when war and Millrace disrepair stopped the fete temporarily.

The first fete, held in 1915, may be said to have established a tradition particularly befitting to Oregon: it rained.

Oregon students are a persevering lot, however, and the festivity which had gotten off to such a dampened start survived—even prospered.

Diver Trained Flames

The very next year, as if to show they weren't going to be licked, Oregon students imported John McMurray, a champion swimmer from Ireland to set off the festivities by diving from the roof of the raceway in a shroud of flowers and leaving a trail of flame behind him.

In the next few years fireworks to set off the proceedings and spotlights on the floats came into use. An actual water carnival with swimming, diving, and other aquatic contests also was made part of the fete, and remained a feature until 1931.

Fire, Water, Added Attractions

Not all was progress, however. In 1918 two floats overturned, in 1919 one caught fire, and in 1927

a big flood so damaged the Millrace that the fete was not held that year.

The first fete to be built around a central theme was 1933's "Fete Fantastique," in which each float depicted a fairy tale.

After this now fundamental precept was established the Fete really got off the ground. By 1937 it had become such a extravaganza that it was broadcast by NBC throughout the United States.

Among the features which made it so outstanding during these years were lights submerged beneath water, background music, and a comic fete.

Sunshine Insured for Vienna

The first insurance policy was taken out in 1940 when a \$1,000 policy covered "Springtime in Vienna," as floats drifted down to Millrace to the Background music of Strauss waltzes.

The last fete before war temporarily halted things was in 1941. Seats were sold out days in advance for the Arabian nights theme, which included a comic fete built around the theme, "Stars Fell on Ali Baba." A magician provided special entertainment for this historic fete and the water carnival was held on a grand scale.

Fete 'Dry-docked'

But by May 1942 a cloud of seriousness had settled on the campus. UO students had more important things to think about—like winning a war. And even when these days had passed, damage to the Millrace and the construction of the new highway led to the replacement of the Fete with a float parade through the downtown streets.

As a tradition the Canoe Fete seemed to have passed into oblivion. But by 1955 plans for re-

storing the Millrace had created reawakened interest in it.

Slowly the fete began to return to life. From nothing at the beginning of the 1954-55 year it grew until on the night of May 15, 1955 the Canoe Fete was once more a reality.

The reborn Fete was held around the song, written by Robin Nelson, '09, "As I Sit and Dream At Evening." Each float portrayed a different past Canoe Fete theme.

Winning float was "La Fete Fantastique," a huge sea dragon carrying a mermaid queen. The float was built by Carson Hall, Alpha Xi Delta, Phi Gamma Delta, and Tau Kappa Epsilon.

1956 theme was Disneyland; 1957 Styles in Sound. At the latter, Hoagy Carmichael played for

the guests in spite of a down-pour and Junior Weekend Queen Sue Walcott rode on a "Stardust" float.

'Great Rivers' '58 Theme

This year floats will depict dreams of great rivers dreamt as one "drifts" down the Millrace.

"Will rain come?" "Will the floats turn out well?" "Will there be enough seating space?" As in years past students are

worrying and planning as they prepare for one of the University's most colorful traditions.

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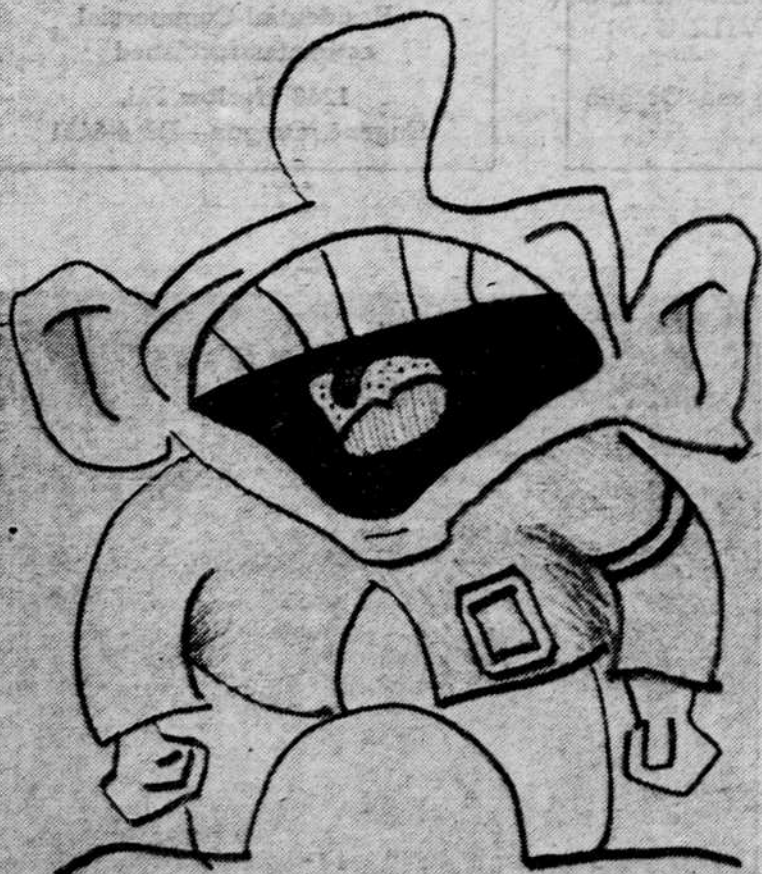
(FOR HALF OF A REAL JUICY FRIED CHICKEN!)

"SIS BOOM HAA!"

(OR JUICY LARGE AND LITTLE BASKET BURGERS!)

"IT'S DICK 'N JIM'S"...

"YEA!" "YEA!" "YEA!"



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