

Irish tradition special to fans of any age

By Randy Malat
Of the Emerald

"Rockne was a master," says John Kilkenny, Notre Dame class of '25. "He had a way of taking the eagle out of the stars that was unbelievable, and a way of putting confidence in people that didn't think they were able to do what he wanted from them. He took each of the Four Horsemen apart at least once a week. There were no favorites on Rock's teams."

Kilkenny arrived in South Bend, Indiana in 1920, the last year George Gipp coached the football team. He "sat on the bench a lot and never made a letter" under Knute Rockne. Today, in his 81st year, he sits on the bench of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Portland.

Judge Kilkenny says he doesn't believe in the "mystique" of Notre Dame football,

but he is a kind of link with the origins of a chapter of our national mythology. He says the idea of a team called The Fighting Irish "drew from the public, even those who didn't have a drop of Irish blood, who could at least cheer for someone who usually wins."

Only Crowley remains of the backfield that Grantland Rice called The Four Horsemen of Notre Dame in the fall of '24, but the legend persists. A friend of Don Miller, Jim Crowley, Elmer Layden and Harry Stuhldreher, and often a dinner guest of the Rockne's, Kilkenny is a model of loyalty and something of a native archetype: the football fan.

"I drive my wife crazy," he says. "I have two TV's and the radio going all at the same time. Now since we have cable I watch the replays of the Notre Dame games. I've watched the Purdue game three times to pick

out their weaknesses." And a week from Saturday, for only the second time since he moved back to Oregon after his student days, he'll get to demonstrate that loyal spirit in person.

Peter Murphy Jr., Notre Dame class of '58, says that 12,000 Notre Dame fans are coming to town. Murphy, who had a hand in planning this game back in 1967, heads a committee that is planning the festivities for the visitors. He estimates that all but 2,000 of the faithful who arrive will be from the Northwest or California.

Many of these fans are "subway alums" who, according to Murphy, "have never attended a class or been on campus but know more about the football team than some of us graduates." And atop the hierarchy of fanatics are over 100 people who never miss a Fighting Irish football game. They'll

come to Eugene from New York, New Jersey, Louisiana, Texas and wherever else air transport makes the gridiron just a flight away.

A friend of Judge Kilkenny, a "frustrated athlete" and a regular listener to Notre Dame football via the Mutual radio network, Murphy knows his priorities. "I believe in college football," he says. He supports both the Ducks and the Oregon State Beavers.

"When it comes to football and my wife and sex, I'm religious," he says. With a son at Notre Dame and two cousins on the Duck squad (kicking specialist Paul Schwabe and freshman linebacker E.J. Duffy) he's possessed of an admirable magnanimity. "I hope it comes down to the last play of the game. Nothing would please me more. I'm just looking for a good game."

Murphy is president of the Murphy Co., a third-generation forest products firm in Springfield. Beliefs in the value of tradition and continuity, as well as sportsmanship, animate his activities and his outlook. "Notre Dame is always very loyal to their opponents except for the three hours on the gridiron," he says.

Bracketing the game will be pep rallies, tailgate parties and other festivities. Jim Hoffman, a Eugene lawyer, Notre Dame class of '68, will join the party.

"I used to watch Notre Dame on TV as a kid," he says. "I'm a real rah rah guy. I love pep rallies and marching bands and all that sort of thing. I was probably born 20 or 30 years too late."

Don't be silly, Jim. When it comes to football, we're all the same age. Ask Judge Kilkenny.

Notre Dame football is Oregon's financial savior

By Randy Malat
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For many fans, Notre Dame football is like an object of faith, suffused with magic and surrounded by a holy aura. It is a dispenser of spiritual health.

But for others associated with the spectacle, like the Oregon athletic department this season, Notre Dame football is a financial angel that provides material well-being.

"The uniqueness of Notre Dame," says Mike Easterly, athletic department business manager, "is that they're making this season financially viable. If we didn't have this game, the Oregon athletic department would be in very difficult financial straits."

Athletic director Rick Bay says the game, sold out except for students seats, will generate "the biggest gate in Oregon

football history."

Individual seats for the general public went for \$15.50, an unprecedented sum in this region for big-time college football.

Easterly has budgeted approximately \$350,000 from public and student ticket sales. He estimates an additional \$10,000 from Autzen stadium parking proceeds. The average game brings in about \$130,000. The Duck football ticket sales account for about 75 percent of the athletic department's yearly budget.

Football powers from outside the Pac-10 rarely venture into the Northwest. Notre Dame has done so only once in this century, to face Washington in 1949. "We're at a disadvantage because we're in a part of the country that's hard to get to," Bay says. "The expenses are big and the payoff is not. It's

tough to get football powers here because they usually have bigger stadiums than we have at Autzen. We haven't been getting crowds large enough to entice major teams to come here."

The Ducks drew an average of 33,000 fans a game in 1980, and 28,000 in 1981. Crowds for this year's three games have averaged about 20,000. Bay says he expects in excess of the 42,000 Autzen stadium capacity for the contest with the Fighting Irish, depending on how many standing room tickets the fire marshal allows to be sold.

So the game will be lucrative at least in the short-run — a much-needed profitable occasion. But when the Irish leave, and the athletic department looks again to the future, will this unique weekend be just a pleasant memory?

"The main benefit in the long

run would be to win the game," Bay says. "A victory over Notre Dame would be a real plum. When you're undefeated, you're fighting for a championship. When you haven't won a game, you're fighting for respectability."

The Ducks have won only twice in 16 games since the beginning of last season.

"We've been saying all along that, despite our record, we're not a bad football team," Bay says. "There's a foundation there for a pretty good football program. The game is mostly important to us because, if we can win it, it'll give us a kind of instant credibility nationwide. That would provide our program with a sense of existence that we don't really have. That does a great deal in terms of recruiting."

A local company, Oh Shirt, is marketing a T-shirt that ex-

presses the hopes of all Duck supporters: it says "Ducks eat Irish stew."

Eugene's business community also has reason to bless the coming of the Irish, considering the shower of money the weekend will mean for the parched local economy. Most of the hotels in the area are booked. Restaurant owners, merchants and other entrepreneurs expect the convention of revellers to throw plenty of bucks around.

Notre Dame's fall break occurs the last week in October, a gift of scheduling that promises to increase the voltage of post-game partying. As many as 12,000 Notre Dame enthusiasts are expected to emerge from the woodwork.

Trish Kaminski, co-owner of Oh Shirt, and a member of the Eugene and Springfield

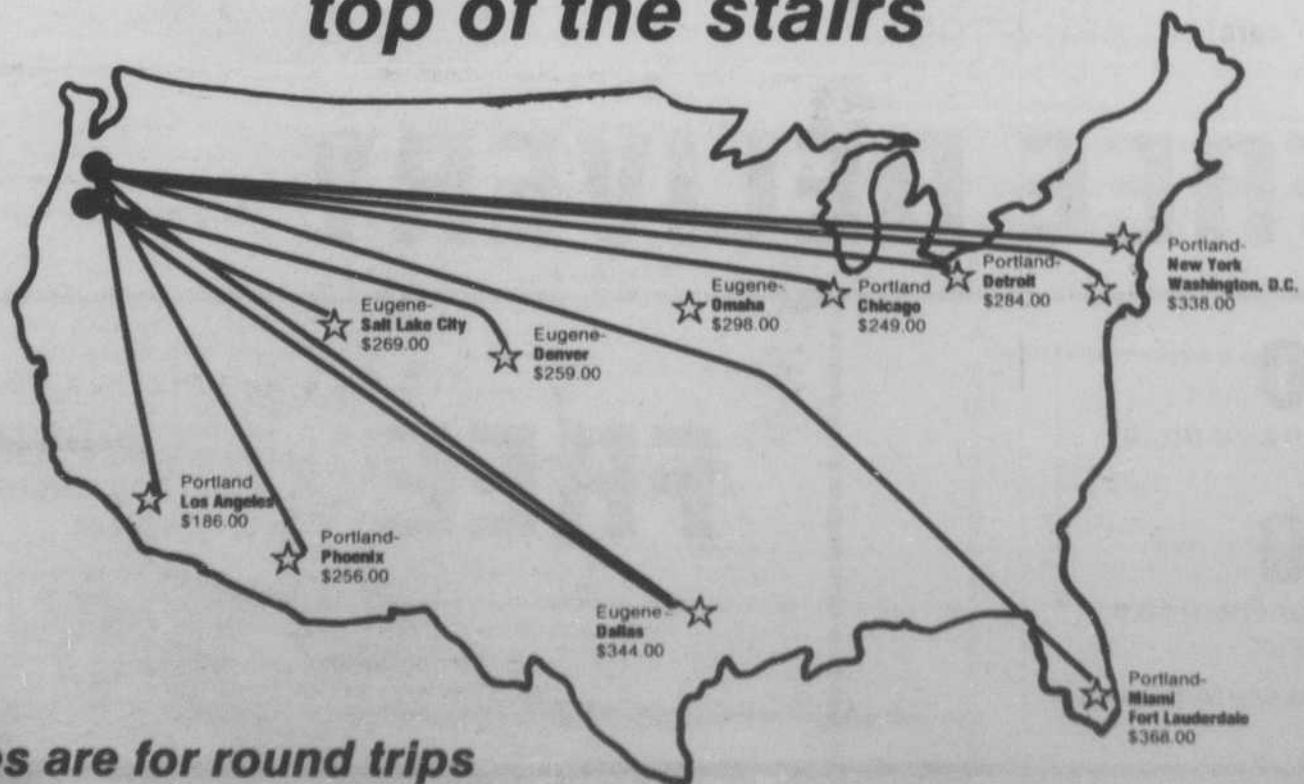
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