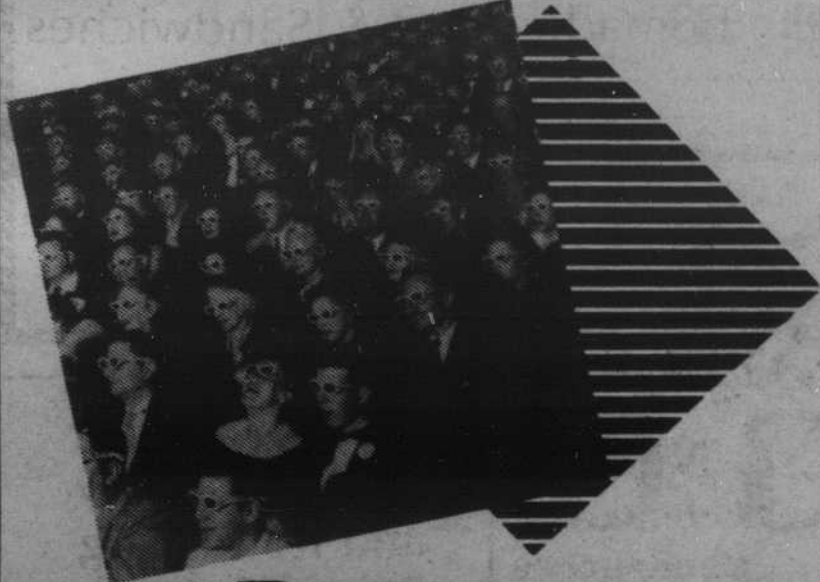


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Old tradition given new life

By Lori Steinhauer

Of the Emerald

No brass band will strike up a tune for visiting alumni, nor will a Cougar replica smolder in a blazing bonfire as in the past. Nonetheless, this year Homecoming will make its way from scrap books to city streets.

And after more than a decade of lying dormant on the shelf, with only the Homecoming football game to whisper an annual commemoration to University alumni, the traditional spirit has been rekindled for the second year in a row.

A snake dance, a light parade, and a pep rally are all part of a toast to alumni, students and community members in Eugene this week.

Homecoming is "a chance to get a little bit of nostalgia (and pride," says Mary Hudzikiewicz, University director of community services.

But while the purpose remains the same the traditions of the 1980s don't match up to



Emerald file photo

Organizers of the 1940 Homecoming obviously thought big, in the true spirit of yesteryear. The spirit waned during the 1960s but is making a comeback.

those of the past.

In 1909, about 600 alumni hitched a ride on a train at stops on the way from Portland to Eugene, to be greeted at the train station by a brass band for the first official Homecoming.

The events of the first celebration — the Friday night bonfire, followed the next day by the Homecoming football game and luncheon — snowballed in to an annual extravaganza. By the late 1920s and early 1930s the luncheons attracted up to 4,000 alumni, says University Archivist Keith Richard.

Bonfire scrap piles were guarded by freshmen so rival students didn't light them prematurely. Burning a replica of the other team's mascot and rallying enthusiasm the night before the Homecoming game was a tradition that lasted until the city of Eugene passed an ordinance to stop outside burning in the 1960s.

The bonfire with the most lasting impression was built in 1917, standing more than 40 stories high, according to Richard, and burning for three nights and two days.

The noise parade brought the thundering Homecoming thrill in the mid-1940s. Flatbed trucks loaded with "anything that would make noise" would blast down a charted path in the University vicinity, Richard says.

"We got so loud we blew out

some windows downtown," Hudzikiewicz recalls.

Floats could be heard roaring through the streets during Homecoming week until a 1970 city noise ordinance put an end to the noise parade. But the parade made a more peaceful reappearance last year in the form of the Town and Gown Light Parade.

Crowning queens and holding dances became the Homecoming highlights of the 1950s, when sock hops and beauty contests attracted large crowds. A sign contest among Greek houses, dormitories and co-ops also was popular. "The signs were very elaborate, with lights and music, and that to many alumni signifies Homecoming," Hudzikiewicz says.

But with the anti-establishment fervor of the 1960s, Homecoming was no longer cool. Students just couldn't groove on tradition and school spirit — not with thoughts of liberating the world on their minds. Furthermore, choosing a Homecoming queen did not jibe with the aims of the burgeoning women's liberation movement.

"Homecoming — Kill and Bury it, Or Give it a Shot in the Arm," headlined a Nov. 18, 1967, Emerald editorial. And buried it was for the next 16

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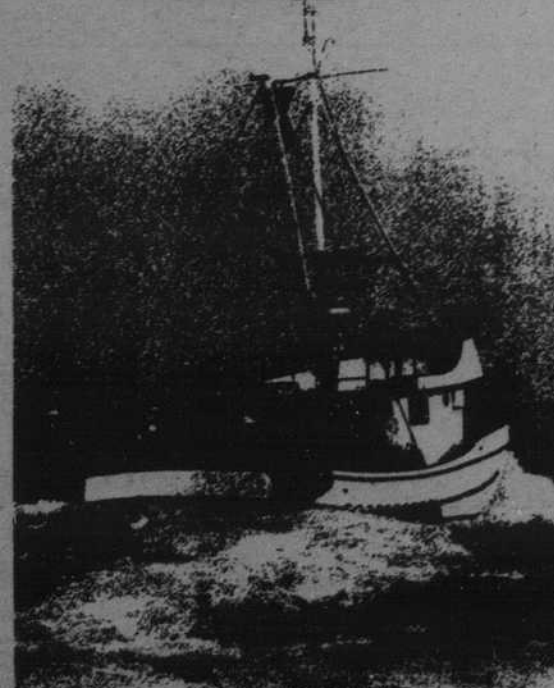
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