

McArthur Court

Aging and dilapidated, the behemoth structure still strikes fear and awe into the hearts of opponents.

It was the "white elephant" back in 1926. Then it was dubbed the "igloo." A 1956 brochure deemed it the "West Coast's best college basketball pavillion." And now McArthur Court is simply regarded as "the Pit."

Clifton McArthur probably never thought a place bearing his name would breed some of the most rabid and feared basketball fans in the country. McArthur was the University of Oregon's first student body president back in 1901 and was also the first editor of the Oregon Weekly, predecessor to the Oregon Daily Emerald. He also served the state of Oregon as a U.S. Congressman for four terms before his death in 1923.

Mac Court was funded by a student-imposed, \$15 fee that was OK'd by an ASUO vote. Now, if the 1987 ASUO decided to do something similar to this plan to finance the Autzen dome, it would come out to roughly \$941 per student. Unfortunately, generosity went out the door with bell bottoms and sideburns.

The students felt the need for a "basketball pavillion." They got one in 1926, a 6,000-seater. It hosted a variety of events, including the theater and the circus.

Most opposing coaches and players still believe it's a circus at McArthur Court. Marv Harshman, who ended an illustrious coaching career at the Universi-



Photo by John Giustina

ty of Washington, thought so in 1976. He and his team wore Groucho Marx glasses to protest fan behavior. And when he retired at the end of the 1985 season, the entire student section bid him a hardy and good-humored farewell by donning the costume themselves.

Mac Court recently received more national recognition in The Sporting News' 1986-87 college basketball edition. Joe Roads, a traveling hoop junkie who spent the entire 1985-86 college basketball season touring the country just to watch basketball games, rated Mac Court as the second best place in the country to watch a college basketball game. The Palestra, a 9,200-capacity building in Philadelphia, garnered first prize for housing the fans of Villanova University, Temple University, and St. Joseph's

University, among others.

However, the Pit is nothing like it was during the Dick Harter Kamikazee Kids-era (1971-78), when Mac Court was first awarded its surname. All home games were sold out in 1976-77, which would eventually be the second year in a row for an Oregon appearance at the National Invitation Tournament.

Right alongside an Emerald ad promoting the Jethro Tull concert at \$5 a ticket, student tickets were being advertised in the classified section for as high as \$50 per game. Home games

were televised in 138 Gilbert and the EMU fishbowl for those not so fortunate.

Some fans were so enthusiastic they would endure freezing temperatures and spend the night before a game under the breezeway of Mac Court to get the choicest seats. Even up to a few years ago, down sleeping bags were commonplace on the sidewalk. The scene two hours before doors opened was similar to football tailgater festivities at Autzen stadium, and at one hour prior to the magic moment, the lines would extend either way for a few blocks.

There was also a news story about then-ASUO Vice President Jamie Burns offering season passes for those who would work crowd-control "to alleviate a potentially dangerous situation." No one ever signed up.

It's no wonder. There are reports of getting hailed with trash and verbal — and almost physical — assaults on players, coaches, referees and the like.

One student, upon hearing Mac Court was built 60 years ago, was overheard saying, "Man. This place is old enough to have ghosts." It didn't need any phantoms, the place was horrifying enough already for visitors.

Harter will not shoulder the responsibility for the raucous behavior, but he certainly didn't mind the atmosphere. "It was the players — the players played

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