

Homecoming traditions victims of changing times

By Kelly Kortekaas
Special Issues Editor

Frosh beanies, painting the "O," Homecoming coronation, noise parades — all have become

foreign phrases, empty words and casualties of the new mentality; the anti-war, liberal and feminist movements of the early 1970s.

What happened to those innocent, fun- and spirit-filled glory days of yore? Former

EMU Director Dick Reynolds told the Emerald in 1971 that "students today seem to have no time for tugs-of-war or making floats." Reynolds added at the time that student involvement in society's problems helped bring about apathy toward Homecoming tradition.

"With a tradition so far dead, it's hard to revive," said University Archivist Keith Richard. For tradition to carry on, customs must pass from generation to generation, he said. But with older students failing to pass along Homecoming customs, and a general disinterest in Homecoming from new students, tradition dies.

Homecoming was once a "student party put on for the alumni" — a welcome back to their alma mater, Richard said. However, a decline in the Greeks' willingness to do Homecoming volunteer work, coupled with student apathy, the task for organizing the event has "fallen upon the alumni office," he explained.

Richard noted not all traditions fit every generation. When trying to revive Homecoming in

1983, Homecoming organizers chose "pieces and parts" of old traditions it believed would appeal to its new set of students. Homecoming '83 activities included a team tug-of-war, painting the "O," a serenade on campus, and the annual

Richard remembers the days when fraternities would "go out of their way" to raise a big ruckus during the noise parade. He told the tale of the freshman class of 1917 building the University's biggest bonfire — four stories high — in a field



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Changing social climates have placed Homecoming traditions in the back seat.

Homecoming sign contest between fraternity and sorority houses and residence halls. Unfortunately, he said, alumni kept swimming against student disinterest.

where the art museum now stands. He also remembers when the school would put on a "beautiful Homecoming dance," featuring big names such as The Supremes, Dionne Warwick, Ella Fitzgerald and The Temptations.

These dances, he said, were designed to attract both alumni and students. With today's music, Richard asserted, it would be hard to choose a band that could attract both.

Richard commented on how
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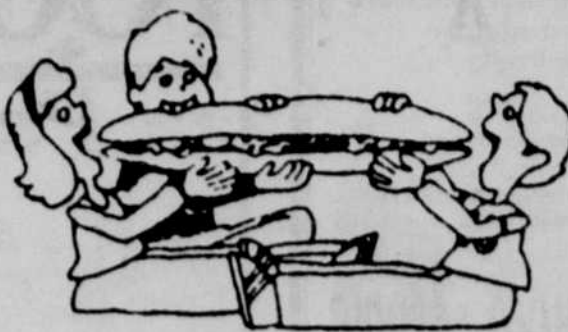


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