

Hail to the Barn Dance

Going to a sorority barn dance can definitely bring a few surprises when it comes to the greek system



Mason West

When I came to college I was dead set against the greek system. Not in general, that is, but just for myself. I try not to stereotype, but I don't like to party every weekend wearing Abercrombie & Fitch. So imagine my surprise when I found myself at a sorority party a week ago Saturday.

My next door neighbor, Ginger, invited me to attend her sorority's "barn dance," as soon as she got her bid. For the greek-impaired, "bid" means that she was asked to join. She's an Alpha Chi Omega. Various greek houses host such "barn dances" around this time of year, but I'm sure the Alpha Chi's was the best. I figured a party planned that far in advance must be quite the "to do" so I said sure.

You must be wondering by now, as I was, what exactly a "barn dance" is. Well basically, it's a dance in a barn. Seems simple, doesn't it? And yet, that's not what I thought it was. I figured that we would party at the sorority house and there might be hay on the floor. Perhaps a scarecrow, but that was pushing it.

Before I get into the details of the event, there is one thing you should know. There is a custom in the greek system that goes along with the barn dance called "tapping." Being a theater person, I assumed that I would strap on my tap shoes and do a few good box steps. Wrong. Tapping is the way that the girls announce to their "sisters" who their date is by tackling him to the ground. This would take a very long time if all the "sisters" didn't assist in the tackle after about three seconds into the attempt.

Back to the dance. We started out the evening around 7 p.m. at the "pre-funk," or pre-function. Ginger and I and about 15 other couples piled into a room at a local motel for an hour and a half or so and ate pizza and talked and watched the first part of the UO / Arizona game. It was great.

Everyone there was very happy and talkative. We couldn't judge each other by our clothes because we were all dressed ridiculously in overalls and flannel and other barn attire. This allowed me to socialize with all sorts of people that I wouldn't be able to in my normal



Bryan Dixon Emerald

clothes.

There was one fellow in particular who was just overjoyed. His date coincidentally must have been named "Date," seeing as that was all he called her and she responded every time. I thought that was funny.

Around 9 p.m. everyone going to the dance gathered in the US Bank parking lot to load into the buses that would escort us to the barn. Instead of "Hail to the bus driver," the girls sang their merry sorority songs along the way.

All the while the dirt road caused the car to bump like so many Honda Civics.

We got to the barn, and much to my surprise, it was a barn. There were horses corralled on one side and hay bails stacked to the ceiling, and a broken tractor sat lonely outside the doors.

A number of security guards dressed entirely in black told us the rules, which included instructions not to pee on the electric fence. In the midst of it all was a DJ. There wasn't hay on the ground, just wood chips. That would

have to do.

I danced the night away to the beats of "Footloose," Jay-Z and Master P, among others. And boy, did I "make 'em say uhhhhhh." To make the night even better, they had Coke! Not Pepsi but Coke! That is something that I have been missing since I got here, but that's another story.

There were only three problems that occurred: 1. The music was stopped short twice when two individuals were swinging from the rope attached to the rafters. In all fairness, though, I was tempted to do the same thing. 2. The dust from the wood chips got in my lungs and made me cough a lot. And 3. It ended at 11:15 p.m., which is far too early to stop dancing.

Despite the few hindrances, I recommend the barn dance experience to everyone. It was loads of fun, and it's very organized and safe.

Mason West is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at mwest1@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the editor

Rules of the road

The letter to the editor "Tickets have no basis" (ODE Oct. 28) provides an opportunity to make available some information that people should know about bikes on campus. By state law, bike riders have the same rights and responsibilities as car drivers. Same roads; same rules; same fines. Below are two rules that are not statewide but do apply to our campus:

1. Do not ride your bike on the sidewalk — except in designated areas. You should think of applying this rule off campus, too. If you absolutely must ride your bike on sidewalks when you are off campus, by law and for everyone's safety, ride at a walking speed. In addition, both car drivers and bike riders need to do a much better job of respecting pedestrians' rights.

2. Only lock your bike to a bike rack. This is for your bike's security and out of respect for others and the environment. In order to optimize the available parking at bike racks, please do not use them for long-term parking, except at residence halls. This is especially important in high-demand areas such as the library and near East 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street.

Signs are one answer, but it is not possible or desirable to list on a sign everything that is or is not permissible. As an alternative to often unsightly signs, this information and more is available on the OPS Web site <<http://safetyweb.uoregon.edu>>, in a brochure available at OPS, by calling me at 346-5425 or by e-mail at bikes@oregon.uoregon.edu.

David Niles
 UO Bicycle Coordinator

Letter missed the point

The letter that appeared in last Tuesday's Emerald (ODE Oct. 19) completely misses the point about student fees. Spies couches his desire to silence groups with whom he disagrees with a lot of hollow rhetoric about free speech.

Our fee systems works because it allows for student opinions and programs that stretch across political, social and cultural spectrums. Spies suggests that cutting the funding for these groups will actually help them "contribute to the market place of ideas." Cutting funds to this group will silence them all.

Student fees pay for intercollegiate athletics, the Outdoor Program, the Multicultural Center and all of the other student groups that contribute to the market place of ideas Spies would like to gut. The fees don't endorse a viewpoint, they create a fo-

rum for different viewpoints to exist. On this campus, fees pay for the widely differing viewpoints of the Commentator and the Insurgent. Without funding, the presses would stop and we all suffer when censorship silences vigorous debate.

But Spies believes it is an affront to have any of his fee dollars go to a program he may not like. Using this logic the University should offer tuition refunds to students who are troubled by a biology professor teaching evolution instead of creationism?

In a University everyone is challenged by new ideas, some we may even find offensive. Having confidence in your beliefs means you don't shy away from those that oppose you. I thought that was why we were here.

Ray Suit
 Business Administration