

# Quacker backers



Laura Trejo Courtesy of University Alumni Association

(Above) The University Marching Band provides music to Oregon fans during a rally the night before the Dec. 31 Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas. (Below) University Marching band drummers stroll through the pregame rally, drumming all the while. (Bottom) Autzen Stadium and McArthur Court public address announcer Don Essig gets Duck fans into it with his on-stage antics during the Oregon rally.

## ■ Oregon fans make themselves right at home during Sun Bowl festivities

By Tim Pyle  
Oregon Daily Emerald

EL PASO, Texas — Besides a mid-60s temperature, the dusty brown landscape and a stadium that sat nestled between hills across the parking lot, it almost seemed as though the pregame Dec. 31 reveling was being waged outside Eugene's Autzen Stadium, not El Paso's Sun Bowl Stadium.

Depending on willingness to imagine, that is.

Beneath green-and-yellow balloon bunches, Oregon football fans prepared for the 66th Sun Bowl inside a fenced-off pregame party.

The Oregon Marching Band strolled through, accompanied by the cheerleaders.

The masses were dressed nearly exclusively in that familiar Ducks garb.

And University Bookstore-sponsored tables sold more Oregon goods just outside the gate.

"It's everything we hoped for," said Paul Stieber, the assistant director of communication with the alumni association, while noting that more than 1,000 Duck fans were preparing for game-time behind him.

But a closer look at the crowd revealed that University students were notably absent.

Alumni from Phoenix and middle-aged and older fans who made the trip from Oregon made up the majority of the Ducks' cheering section.

Most of those who looked college-aged were revealed to be former Oregon residents living in the Southwest or the teen-age children of rabid Duck parents.

As in most cases, there were, of course, exceptions.

ASUO President Wylie Chen was on hand, enjoying a blue-skied morning with fellow University students Cheryl Behrens and Christian Papé.

ASUO Vice President Mitra

Anoushiravani was also in town but had yet to show at the party because of a stomach virus, according to Chen.

Nevertheless, Chen was unfazed in making a Sun Bowl prediction without his political partner.

"We're gonna win because every home game we've had it's been sunny, and we've won," Chen said. "Today, it's the first really sunny day we've had since we've been here, and we'll win."

Chen would turn out to be as accurate in his sports prediction as he was in his campaign approach last spring, but first there was more partying, Duck-style, to do.

A rarity among the Oregon fans, George Mattox was not in El Paso for the first time. A season-ticket holder who has lived in Eugene since 1960, Mattox cheered the Ducks in their first Sun Bowl appearance, a 1963 win over Southern Methodist.

And he had a tickling memory from that game, to boot.

Mattox said he and a friend traveled across the border to El Paso's Mexican sister city, Juarez, for a meal in the days leading up to the game. There, Mattox and company persuaded a restaurant band to play "Mighty Oregon" for them.

When Duck coaches entered the restaurant soon after, they were pleased to find what they thought was a greeting being played in their honor.

Such bowl memories were rare for Oregon fans until the last decade. After winning the 1963 Sun Bowl, the Ducks did not play again in the postseason until the 1989 Independence Bowl.

Now, with eight bowl appearances in the last 11 years, Oregon fans are getting used to success — and loving it.

"They've done a great job," said Jeff Coffee of Eugene, a Ducks fan since 1962 who was attending his fifth bowl game. "Bill Moos is a real good athletic director, and Mike Bellotti is a



great coach."

And Oregon fans were equally enthusiastic about the warm reception they had received in El Paso.

"It's pretty cool," said Matt Groshong, a 28-year old University alumnus now working for Microsoft in Seattle. "People are really friendly."

Between the warm, sunny weather, El Paso's hospitality and what would be a great Ducks win New Year's Eve afternoon, there would be nary a Sun Bowl-experience complaint among Oregon fans.

Heck, even a Washington Huskies fan originally from Kelso, Wash., who had retired in El Paso was having a blast with the pregame tailgating.

"I haven't missed a Sun bowl in I can't remember how many years," said Allan Jones from beneath his purple Huskies cap. "I'm cheering for the Ducks, and I'd like to be happy when I go home."

Jones assuredly joined legions of other Oregon fans in being much more than satisfied when all was said and done.

