

The Evolution of School Spirit and Tradition at Oregon State University

Benjamin D. Forgard

March 2012

We are the boys who make a noise
For good old O.A.C.,
And every gallant lad enjoys
To let the cheer ring free.
At game or drill we have the will,
Whereever it may be,
To raise the colors higher still
Of the good old O.A.C.

Zip Boom Bee, Zip Boom Bee,
O.A., O.A., O.A.C.
O.A., O.A., O.A.C.
Zip Boom Bee, Zip Boom Bee,
We love you O.A.C.
Your mirth and music mingled well
Binds all our hearts to thee
Tradition weaves a magic spell
Around good old O.A.C.

“The Good Old O.A.C.”
(First verse and chorus)

R.N. Moffat

Reflecting trends set by popular culture, school spirit and traditions at Oregon State University not only conformed to changing times, but also experienced extreme highs and lows during the 20th century. Particularly with relation to athletic events and class rivalries, spirit at Oregon State experienced a general downward trend during World War II, exemplified after a brief resurgence with bouts of relatively uninspired periods of indifference. Given the integral role of school spirit in college life, one might question whether the trend was an inevitable generational change normal to society, or whether a larger issue was involved. Such questioning reveals an unexpected--but not unusual-- discovery in that each period of deflated school spirit correlates with military conflict gripping the culture in the United States, particularly the second World War and Vietnam.

The terms “school spirit” and “tradition” are often used interchangeably; however, for this paper’s purposes, they have very different meanings. “School spirit” refers to the sense of pride conveyed toward one’s university, while "tradition" refers to an established set of student-enforced rules and regulations intended to foster additional school spirit. Tradition may result from spontaneous activities repeated by the student body, or it may simply be an activity formed by a committee with the intent to either increase spirit or create a way to channel it. Tradition plays a supporting role in promoting spirit, while spirit’s role is to establish positive feelings towards the alma mater.

School spirit began at the State Agricultural College’s campus in 1892 with the arrival of President Bloss.¹ Until the death of his predecessor, President Arnold, nothing was permitted to distract students from studies, especially public games and entertainment.² Athletics and extra-

¹ S.A.C., the moniker following Corvallis College, was a precursor to later names used: Oregon Agricultural College (O.A.C.), Oregon State Agricultural College (O.S.A.C.), Oregon State College (OSC), and finally, Oregon State University (OSU).

² Dick Gearhart, *Orange & Black* (Corvallis: Oregon State College Alumni Association, 1938), 87.

curricular activities were not considered proper for an educational establishment, especially one run by a former Southern gentleman. When President Bloss arrived in 1892 after Arnold's untimely death, extra-curricular activities enjoyed the administration's approval for the first time.³ Within a year the school color changed to orange from navy blue, and Bloss even allowed a football team to form. During the first football game, both teams' crowds eagerly formed "serpentine" formations on the field at halftime, a popular tradition at Oregon State and other schools for many decades.⁴

At the same time, the school's first mascot was chosen, a real coyote named Jimmie.⁵ Shortly after Jimmie's introduction, regent and loyal fan Reverend J.R.N. Bell became the official school mascot after establishing a tradition of throwing his hat into the Mary's River following each football victory over arch-rival Oregon, ensuring that the rich mascot tradition at O.A.C. would continue with increased popularity.^{6,7} The first school cheer, "Zip Boom Bee," enjoyed sensational success as students eagerly embraced the new culture.⁸ School cheers caught on so quickly that in 1896, the faculty was forced to impose a ban on school cheers during chapel.⁹ The rapid embrace of school spirit should hardly be a surprise; to the north, students at the University of Washington publicly chastised students not attending athletic events as early as

³ The athletic tradition set by Bloss was briefly interrupted by the Board of Regents in 1900, but otherwise remained intact except for instances of conscripted war. According to Robert Stern, most early colleges considered organized student activity to be foreign to the purpose of college, a belief which President Arnold likely shared.

⁴ See Appendix A for a description and Appendix B for images of "The Serpentine."

⁵ Betsy Kraus, "Traditions," *The Oregon Stater*, June 1989, 10.

⁶ Kraus, 10.

⁷ The original mascots were not used in today's context; the teams had nicknames like the "Aggies" and "Hayseeds" before later adopting "Beavers," despite having a coyote and a person as the official mascot. Until at least the late 1920s, the term "mascot" is not to be confused with the names used by the teams as the mascot played a role similar to a class pet. For additional information on each mascot, see Appendix A.

⁸ The cheer: "Zip Boom Bee, Zip Boom Bee, S. A., S.A., S.A.C.!" The cheer appears widely in various publications and is quoted in the song by R.N. Moffat at the start of this paper. According to Welsch and Edmonston, the cheer originated as a result of President Bloss asking the faculty to collaborate with students to create an official cheer (page 4).

⁹ Gearhart, 87.

1895.¹⁰ Following decades of similar movements on the east coast, students in the west eagerly embraced the change.¹¹

Despite the influx of spirit ushered in by President Bloss, traditions took their time to arrive on the O.A.C. campus, with few traditions introduced before 1900.¹² Spirit already was reaching fervor on campus in the form of class rivalries, establishing a need to create traditions to channel the sometimes-violent energy present in young men. These rivalries became so intense that the faculty formed the “Rook-Soph bag picnic,” precursor to the popular tug-of-war, in 1909 to provide a means to channel the increasingly boisterous energy, citing fears that escalating pranks might cause harm to other students.¹³ A few years later, the Junior Weekend incorporated the tug-of-war upon forming in 1911, as well as other traditions including canoe tilting and racing, a junior class breakfast, and an all-male theatrical production by the junior class. The weekend ended with an all-school convocation followed by the “Burning of the Green,” a rite of passage for freshmen.^{14,15} Other traditions began in an effort not only to foster spirit towards the alma mater, but also to channel class spirit into organized activities and customs. The “Senior Table” at the popular “A’s and K’s” restaurant was reserved for members of the senior class, and by 1915, seniors started to carve the tabletop, starting a tradition that would last decades as each class incorporated the names of its class members and a class

¹⁰ Charles M. Gates, “Early Athletics at the University of Washington,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1961): 100.

¹¹ See Bernard C. Ewer’s *College Study & College Life* for a 1917 perspective on the evolution of student activity and its clash with school administration at Dartmouth and Yale by 1810.

¹² A ban on smoking was enacted in 1890, but although commonly referred to as an important tradition of the school, its early purpose was as a faculty-imposed rule rather than a student-enforced rule for the promotion of school pride and spirit. Student publications eventually commented on the rule as a sacred tradition, but not for several years after its introduction.

¹³ Gearhart, 173, 176.

¹⁴ Keith A. Mobley to Dr. Simon J. Bronner, May 11, 1989, Memorabilia Collection (MC-Traditions), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

¹⁵ For more on Junior Weekend and the Burning of the Green, see Appendix A.

symbol.¹⁶ As the popularity of tradition increased in an almost religious fervor, school spirit increased until the onset of World War I.

World War I brought about a unique set of challenges to spirit and tradition. Traditions floundered, replaced with patriotism, while spirit surged. Records of specific traditions lost remain scarce, however post-war documentation frequently mentions various traditions lost during the time period. O.A.C. avoided the total collapse of college life and activities plaguing other northwestern schools, but the war still had some major impact.¹⁷

Although not the only factor, athletics are often given the most attention in defining wartime impact on spirit, and the records at O.A.C. certainly indicate a connection between the war and athletics. The football team suddenly abandoned its dominant winning persona with a six-year drop in its winning



percentage.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the basketball team mostly avoided the football team's woes with a stunning undefeated season in 1917-1918, although the conference championship game never took place because of war concerns.¹⁹ But the team took its own dip in its winning percentages immediately after the war, likely due to athletes' eligibility issues upon returning from military

¹⁶ Tom Bennet, "Mystery of the Tabletops," *The Oregon Stater*, October 1995, 21.

¹⁷ Whitman College in Spokane, Washington cancelled its 1917 yearbook, and was even asked by the War Department to suspend all fraternity events. In the class of 1918, only one man did not have to leave for the war, and then only because he failed the military physical. Whitman College, while a private school, was in O.A.C.'s athletic conference. For further reading about the struggles at Whitman College, see G. Thomas Edwards' *The Triumph of Tradition: The Emergence of Whitman College 1859-1924*, pages 408 and 410.

¹⁸ Jeff Welsch and George P. Edmonston Jr. *Tales from Oregon State Sports* (Online: Sports Publishing L.L.C., 2003), 30.

¹⁹ James C. Heartwell, *History of Oregon State College Basketball 1901-02—1952-53* (Corvallis: Cascade Printing Company, 1953), 96.

service.²⁰ The basketball team's success may be attributed to the lack of draftees present on O.A.C.'s basketball team.²¹ This was not the case elsewhere, as evident at Whitman, which lost almost its entire male student body. Baseball and track at O.A.C. both had cancelled seasons due to the war.

While decreased or cancelled performance in athletics likely had a negative impact on expression of school spirit, war culture compensated with a militaristic mentality which complemented tradition; it was not a privilege, but rather it was a duty for students to either play for their teams or to root the teams on, loudly.²² National views of proper college spirit heavily encouraged students to maintain loud cheers even in defeat, and to join the band in welcoming the team home after road trips, successful or otherwise.²³ Individuality, an ideal in conflict with college spirit of the day, was heavily discouraged, while expressing spirit could even be seen as patriotic.²⁴ Wartime society nation-wide encouraged athletics due to the obvious benefits in physical fitness.²⁵

Following the war, many traditions were either instituted or revived at a rate not seen by any other period. In May of 1918, the senior class revived a tradition of burying a hatchet with a jar containing the class roster and a copy of *The Barometer*, the student newspaper.²⁶ A year later, hype began to build over the revival of "Rhododendron Day," a very popular tradition cancelled in 1917 due to the war.²⁷ In other years, the event was known as the "Senior Excursion." Also in May of 1919, the senior class started another longstanding tradition: the

²⁰ Heartwell, 96.

²¹ Heartwell, 96.

²² Bernard C. Ewer, *College Study & College Life* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1917), 149-152.

²³ Robert Stern, "The Development of An Interorganizational Control Network: The Case of Intercollegiate Athletics," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1979): 149-152.

²⁴ Stern, 152-154.

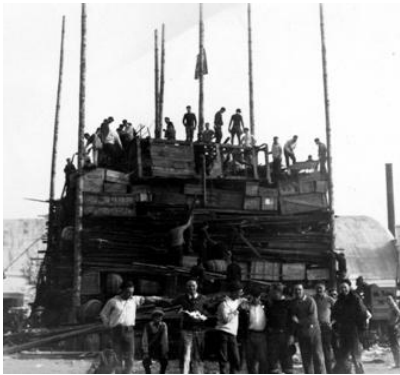
²⁵ Stern, 249.

²⁶ "Seniors bury hatchet," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 21, 1918.

²⁷ "Rhododendron Day Revived," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 28, 1919.

Senior Bench. It was installed by the Co-op building with orders to be painted annually by freshmen. The bench could be used only by seniors, and could be moved only with the permission of the entire senior class.^{28,29} The economic boom in the 20s also saw an increase in athletic prevalence across campuses nation-wide, which in turn provided an outlet for college spirit.³⁰ Hype for athletics jumped as money raised in 1920 expanded Bell Field in an attempt to support the stagnant football team.³¹

Manifestations of pride in O.A.C. continued to rise during the 1920s, mimicking the patriotic movement following World War I. Rooting sections at athletic games were optional, although picking up trash for an hour was the only alternative.³² The 1925 student handbook, required to be carried by freshmen at all times, states that “all colleges are revered and loved because of traditions based upon high ideas.”³³ This pride was demonstrated by various rules specific to freshmen, including the required saluting of the school president and military commandant, attending athletic events, never leaving early from an athletic event, and most



importantly, always working for a “greater O.A.C.”³⁴ As a way to deal with pranks and discipline from upperclassmen, each year rooks found ways to find pride in their class. The homecoming bonfire, known as the “Rook Bonfire,” gave rook the chance to earn bragging rights as each class attempted to make the tallest bonfire in school history. Rooks maintained their unique

²⁸ The Co-op was likely the bookstore building on Jefferson, near the present location of Kerr Administration Building.

²⁹ “19ers install new tradition,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 28, 1919.

³⁰ Stern, 249.

³¹ Welsch and Edmonston, 30.

³² Krause, 10.

³³ Burton S. Hutton. “The Student Handbook and Rook Bible of the Oregon State Agricultural College” (Student Handbook, Corvallis, 1925), 8.

³⁴ Hutton, 8.

traditions and lowly status into the 1930s as spirit and tradition remained relatively unchanged until war again disrupted college life.

The onset of World War II brought harsh challenges to spirit and traditions at OSC. As the “West Point of the West,” Oregon State’s military ties profoundly impacted the school.³⁵ According to one newspaper clipping, 223 students and alumni died during the war, including 50 students deprived of graduation; OSC casualties equaled three times those of World War I.³⁶ Class structure mirrored World War I with its demographics altered due to military service. Everything from athletics to simple rook traditions changed with the times.

The first effects of the war again involved athletics. In the 1941 season, Oregon State’s football team earned a berth to the Rose Bowl, the most-coveted post-season game in collegiate football. Following a victory over their archrival, the University of Oregon, the “Serpentine” tradition revived one last time in the Memorial Union quad as the trip to Pasadena for the Rose Bowl was secured.³⁷ Unfortunately, just days after OSC secured the trip, Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into war. Citing fears of Japanese attacks on events in the West Coast, the Rose Bowl was relocated to Durham, North Carolina. The move did little to squander school spirit, but it marked one of the first real challenges to spirit since World War I. While the change of a game’s location did not have a huge impact on spirit, the loss of a football team did; after winning the Rose Bowl, Oregon State played just one more season before the football program was dropped completely, replaced with an intramural squad for two years due

³⁵ Oregon State had a longstanding tradition of producing more military officers than any other institution except for West Point, earning it the moniker “The West Point of the West.” Today, the effects of its military past can be seen on campus as Oregon State holds an uncommon trait in its hosting of cadet programs for each branch of the military.

³⁶ “223 Oregon Staters Killed During War,” *Corvallis Gazette-Times* (Corvallis, OR), Nov. 17, 1945.

³⁷ See Appendices A and B for a description and images.

to the war effort. Suddenly the highly-organized rooting sections had no teams for which to root. At the same time football was dropped, the basketball team had its own struggles. In the 1943-1944 season, only two of the original 12-man team did not transfer or leave for military service. After scrambling to field the team with freshman, that season provided the lone blemish in a series of good years.³⁸

At the same time the basketball team was struggling, a slow trickle of veterans started to return from service. Although most veterans did not return until the war's completion, enough returned in 1943 that some traditions needed explaining. The "Hello Walk," a walk along the diagonal path between Fairbanks and Gilkey Halls, which later expanded to the entire Memorial Union quad, began to fade.³⁹ Afraid that the older veterans might be unfamiliar with the tradition of exchanging greeting between the two buildings, female students worried that their greetings might be viewed as improper advances on the men. Students took to the *Barometer*, the student newspaper, to explain the tradition to both the women and the veterans in the hopes that the once-popular tradition might not die off.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the campaign was unsuccessful as the walk is included in a list of lost traditions published in 1949.⁴¹

Many other traditions discontinued during the war, though some had hopes of a post-war revival.⁴² Despite the loss of traditions, World War II was not a complete setback for Oregon State, especially during the AWS Carnival, which joined the list of activities for Junior Weekend.⁴³ Students merged patriotism with spirit as they eagerly participated in games such as "Hirohito," a renamed version of "Flip the Spoon and Hit the Goon" which allowed students to

³⁸ Heartwell, 65, 96.

³⁹ In 1943, Fairbanks Hall was known as Kidder Hall, and Gilkey Hall was known as the Dairy Building.

⁴⁰ "College Tradition Open to Soldiers," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Feb. 3, 1943.

⁴¹ "Many OSC Traditions Gain Prestige While Others Drop By The Wayside," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Oct. 13, 1949.

⁴² Harold Graves, "Origin of Traditions," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Nov. 20, 1946.

⁴³ The Association of Women Students Carnival was a prime event of Junior Weekend. It later became known simply as the "Junior Carnival."

flip messes upon professors in a similar manner as dunk tanks typical in many carnivals today, although the “patriotic” name changes reflect the racism of the era.⁴⁴ The Japanese were not the only group targeted in carnival games; one booth featured a game titled “Shatter the Swastika.”⁴⁵

Besides fostering patriotism, these activities also brought students together, prolonging any drop in spirit although not every tradition survived the war; most other activities in Junior Weekend such as the tug-of-war and other class activities either vanished or transferred to other events during the 1940s and early



1950s.^{46,47} As the carnival rose in popularity, the Junior Weekend died off; by 1947, just two years after the carnival joined the weekend’s lineup, the carnival was already a bigger attraction than the rest of the weekend.⁴⁸

As Americans celebrated an Allied victory, veterans returned home. The use of the G.I. Bill found Oregon State, like many schools, with an influx of older students. Many students began to live off-campus, creating a disconnect between themselves and the traditions aimed at resident students.⁴⁹ Compensating for the lost continuity caused by the war, the *Barometer* carried numerous articles celebrating past traditions and encouraging revival. Some traditions modified, such as females wearing rook green only on Wednesdays instead of on a daily basis, representing a new era as returning veterans pointed out the absurdity of some of the hazing

⁴⁴ “Junior Weekend Plans Changed Since ‘Good Old Day’ at OAC,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 20, 1947.

⁴⁵ See Appendix B, Figure #3. Also notice the “Squirt the Squint” booth.

⁴⁶ Mobley.

⁴⁷ For example, between World War II and Vietnam, the Burning of the Green moved to Homecoming in the Fall, shortening the time freshmen had to endure the ritualized hazing.

⁴⁸ “Junior Weekend Plans Changed Since ‘Good Old Day’ at OAC,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 20, 1947.

⁴⁹ Marilyn Seebach, “Students Are Abandoning Many Traditions: Ribbons, Vests, Songs of the Past” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 6, 1960.

rituals.⁵⁰ Nation-wide, male students were older and more mature in an era when community service replaced hazing as the activity of choice.⁵¹ The changed demographic in colleges became apparent when a veteran attending the University of Washington sued the school—and won—claiming that drinking restrictions in his student living quarters were illegal.⁵² Although spirit dropped and many traditions disappeared, especially relating to class status, many members of the OSC community hoped that the traditions could someday return. The Rook Green shifted to just the first week of school and major events during the year.⁵³ Many traditions never fully regained their previous status; however, within a few years, spirit and tradition began to return. Even the senior tabletops enjoyed a brief resurgence in the mid-1950s while the older tabletops hung on display in Gill Coliseum.⁵⁴

Spirit assemblies played a vital role in rejuvenating college spirit at Oregon State. The hour-long gatherings of the student body united students through school songs and cheers, usually led by the yell leader. The assemblies sometimes featured the athletic teams and were used to introduce the rally squad, a very prestigious group on campus. One year, a spirit assembly even introduced the new band director to the student body, an event that might not even warrant a minor citation in today's *The Daily Barometer*.⁵⁵

A spirit assembly introduced perhaps the most important vessel of spirit in school history: Benny



⁵⁰ Myrle Gorbett, "Through Years OSC Tradition Will Not Fade," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), May 21, 1948.

⁵¹ "Rah-Rah of Exuberance Leaves College Boys," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Jun. 4, 1952.

⁵² Krause, 10.

⁵³ Ken Austin in discussion with the author, February 2012.

⁵⁴ Bennett, 21.

⁵⁵ Jim Barratt, "Spirit Assembly," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Sep. 28, 1949.

Beaver.⁵⁶ Conceived by Yell King Bill Sundstrom, Ken Austin made the costume with the help of a Portland costume shop, a football uniform, and scraps from a rug. He based Benny's behavior on rodeo clowns.⁵⁷ As the first "modern" mascot to physically represent athletics, the tradition of maintaining Benny Beaver remains a visible symbol of spirit of students and fans of Oregon State University. Benny's popularity was not an instant success, but the post-war culture at Oregon State established a strong foundation for the mascot.⁵⁸

After traditions resumed and spirit renewed during the post-war period, both experienced difficulty again as the United States entered the Vietnam Conflict in early 1960s. As national culture shifted towards anti-establishmentarianism, the change also came to fruition at Oregon State. Given the extreme shift from a group consciousness to individual expression, it is not difficult to comprehend the general opinion toward tradition designed to foster spirit through an anti-individualistic approach.

The rook green was one of the first major traditions to fall casualty to the anti-establishment movement. Like the women's ribbons a decade earlier, the men's "rook lids" requirement scaled down to just Wednesdays during the day, with the continued exception that homecoming week saw all rook green worn each day. The reduced use of the rooks' green lids and ribbons certainly did not help the tradition; however, the tradition was further doomed since the Burning of the Green moved from Junior Weekend to the homecoming bonfire in November.⁵⁹ With the decreased importance of the rook green, not only did Junior Weekend lose its last strand of significance, but also the wearing of the green lost any real meaning and quickly

⁵⁶ Not to be confused with the statue from the 1940s. See Appendix C.

⁵⁷ Ken Austin in discussion with the author, February 2012.

⁵⁸ See Appendix C for more on Benny Beaver and other mascots.

⁵⁹ Jody Ramsy "'New Look' Seen for OSC Green," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Sep. 23, 1960.

died out. In an article written just seven years after the cutbacks, the rook green is mentioned as a lost tradition.⁶⁰

As many traditions faded, one bright spot remained: Benny Beaver. With the original homemade costume over a decade old, Benny was forced into retirement in 1966 because no Benny was better than a tattered Benny. In 1967, the Home Economics Department helped the Athletic Department develop a new costume, reviving the mascot and ensuring the continuation of at least one valued tradition through the turbulent era.⁶¹

The impact of athletics on spirit had its own backlash beginning in 1969 during the infamous Black Student Union (BSU) walkout, when half of Oregon State's black student population withdrew from the school in response to perceived racism after football coach Dee Andros, in accordance with team rules, demanded that football player Fred Milton shave his beard. With the ever-increasing emphasis placed on individuality, the BSU accused Andros of racism and demanded that football players be allowed to express themselves. Andros refused, other racial inadequacies surfaced, and events eventually led to the BSU walkout, along with various student boycotts of athletic events. With athletics getting such negative treatment, any spirit associated with sports essentially dissipated overnight.⁶²

Along with the dissipation of spirit, football's performance had its own share of difficulties due to subsequent issues with the recruitment of black athletes. After the walkout, some of the remaining black athletes at Oregon State experienced discrimination from other schools, especially from the University of Washington.⁶³ Because of the already-low black

⁶⁰ Seebach.

⁶¹ "Benny Beaver Is Back Again Due to Efforts by OSU Clubs," *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Oct. 22, 1965.

⁶² For further insight in the BSU walkout, see *The Scab Sheet* Vol. I, available in Scholars Archive on the OSU Library website or in the OSU Archives. The *Scab Sheet* was an underground newspaper critical of Andros and in support of the walkout, and it provided extensive support and propaganda.

⁶³ Larry Gossett, U.W. Black Student Union president, wrote an open letter accusing two black OSU track athletes of being "fake," and warning them against setting foot on campus. Intimidated by a confrontation on campus,

student population cut in half by the walkout, and hostile environments at other universities, football recruiting of black athletes took a hit, a large factor in almost three decades of futility in the sport, according to current coach Mike Riley.⁶⁴ Hostility towards the program combined with poor results on the field to create a spiritless void, ending football's place as a major vessel of spirit and tradition.

As the extreme individualist culture subsided into a moderate alternative, interest began to renew in Oregon State's lost spirit. *Oregon Stater* articles occasionally focused on a lost tradition, and pride in the institution returned. Perhaps as a result of the talented basketball team's national success, spirit normally reserved for football found an outlet, as evident by the fervor in the program, which occasionally saw over a thousand fans attend away games.⁶⁵ Bolstered by the resurgent spirit, many traditions, rejected for their representation of the "establishment," began to return, although with limited success. Abandoned during the anti-establishment movement, the homecoming parade and bonfire returned, although the rook green, severely outdated, was not worth any revival attempt. Symbolic of the 1980s nostalgic mindset, the school's alma mater also played before each basketball game.⁶⁶

The revival of the 1980s worked, but not entirely as hoped. The homecoming events were reinstated, but did not regain their original value as the bonfire and parade receive a fraction of the attention they used to enjoy. Many aspects of the homecoming event, such as the homecoming house signs, are now long forgotten.⁶⁷ The playing of the alma mater at basketball

the athletes did not compete after arriving at the track meet. For further reading, see Craig Collisson's dissertation from the University of Washington, "The fight to legitimize blackness: How black students changed the university" and the *St. Petersburg Times* article on April 29, 1969: "Charges Fly After Meet."

⁶⁴ John Henderson, "Oregon State football coach Mike Riley closely connected to Corvallis, Beavers history," *Denver Post*, Aug. 24, 2011.

⁶⁵ Welsch and Edmonston, 172.

⁶⁶ Kraus, 10.

⁶⁷ See Appendix B, Figure #4.

games did not last long; the current band director was not even aware of its past connection with basketball games.⁶⁸

While the attempts of the 1980s were only moderately successful, recent and deliberate attempts have begun anew. Although the vast majority of fans already are gone before its playing, the alma mater is now played by the band after every football game. At the same time that the alma mater began its revival, old popular school songs such as “Mighty Beavers” and “Beaver Pep,” renamed “Cheer for the Beavers,” have resurfaced in an attempt to revive old traditions and to raise spirit.⁶⁹ To increase student involvement in showing spirit in athletic events, a committee formed by student athletes, band and cheer members, and the Greek community formed to actively promote events, most recently with a successful “flash mob” during the 2012 basketball home Civil War.⁷⁰

In the first days of President Bloss, a spirit-deprived student body readily embraced the formerly forbidden concept. Each subsequent generation endured its own problems that impacted spirit’s success and altered the popularity of certain traditions. Other traditions were incompatible with changing times.⁷¹ Throughout the 120-year history of spirit and tradition, they both have gone through ups and downs, with traditions usually replaced every few decades with something more culturally relevant. The basic idea of spirit remained the same, even if subdued during post-war eras, while traditions conformed to the times. Traditions have come and gone, but through periods of extreme highs and lows, spirit has always remained at Oregon State University.

⁶⁸ Dr. Brad Townsend (OSU Director of Athletic Bands) in discussion with the author, March 2012.

⁶⁹ Dr. Brad Townsend (OSU Director of Athletic Bands) in discussion with the author, March 2012.

⁷⁰ Brandon Pavalek (committee member) in discussion with the author, February 2012.

⁷¹ For example, freshmen were paddled in the 1950s by upperclassmen, but just a decade later, the act would be inconceivable. By the 1970s, such an action would likely cause mass-protests.

APPENDIX A - TRADITIONS

Note on dates: Traditions marked with an asterisk may have started much earlier than indicated, but no start-date was found. In most cases, they are simply known to have been established long before World War II.

STARTED BEFORE WWI:

Serpentine – During especially rousing football games, and later during halftime of every home Civil War, Oregon State fans maintained a tradition of assembling a formation on the field resembling a giant serpent. The first recorded occurrence at O.A.C. was in 1893 during the school’s first football game against Albany, and was joined by a formation made by the opposing fans on the other side of the field. The tradition died out sometime in the 1930s, but revived for one game in 1941 upon securing a Rose Bowl berth. See Appendix B, Figures #1 and #2.

Senior Hay-Rack Ride - Unknown start-date, ended after 1909.⁷²

STARTED BEFORE WWII:

The Senior Hatchet* - Under the Trysting Tree, Seniors buried a hatchet, a copy of the Barometer, and a jar filled with names of class members, with plans to dig it back up after five years. The “old custom” was revived in 1918.

Junior Weekend - Also referred to as Campus Weekend from 1924-1938, the earliest known reference is in 1911.⁷³ The weekend included the Burning of the Green, Rook-Soph Tug-of-War, Junior Prom, a preview of the yearbook, and various other events.

Burning of the Green* – All freshmen were required to wear green so that upperclassmen could identify any freshman conducting activities restricted to upperclassmen. Men wore a cap while women wore a ribbon, and cadets wore an armband while in uniform. The “green” was burned in a ceremony during Junior Weekend during which members of every class symbolically advanced in status, pending the result of final exams. By the 1960s, the Burning of the Green moved to occur during the homecoming bonfire, a move removing most of its significance, likely resulting in the tradition’s demise.



Senior Excursion or Rhododendron Day* - Seniors planned a class trip to Newport to view the Rhododendrons when they came into full bloom each spring. This tradition suspended in 1917 due to the war, but revived with great pomp and circumstance in 1919. The outing often included many outside the senior class, or even the student body, as evident by the 1200 in attendance in 1919.

⁷² John Ross, “Oregon State History Reveals Buried Traditions, Activities,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Nov. 16, 1948.

⁷³ Gearhart, 188.

Good Sportsmanship* – O.A.C. had a longstanding tradition of showing courtesy to its opponents. The modern practice of “booing” the opponents, while common elsewhere, was considered bad form at O.A.C. and was heavily discouraged as late as the 1950s. Courtesy towards opponents is even defined in early student handbooks. Showing displeasure towards questionable officiating, however, was acceptable.

Hello Walk* - Originally between Kidder Hall and the Dairy Building (currently called Fairbanks and Gilkey Halls) in the 1920s, the Hello Walk later expanded to the entire Memorial Union quad. Students were expected to extend a friendly greeting to anyone encountered during the walk. The walk’s popularity died off in the 1940s.

Senior Bench - Installed at the Co-op (possibly the bookstore) during the 1919 Junior Weekend, the bench was annually painted by freshmen. The bench was strictly for seniors only, and it could not be moved without approval from the entire class.

Senior Table - A table at the “Al’s and Kerr’s” was reserved for the senior class. Each class enjoyed the tradition of carving and decorating the table top, which was replaced at the end of the year. A lack of storage space saw some of the tables cut up for use as shelves, but the survivors eventually found their way to Gill Coliseum, and later the walls of McAlexander Fieldhouse until recent renovations brought them down.

APPENDIX B - IMAGES



Figure #1—"The Serpentine" – 1910

Harriet's Collection (#0022), courtesy OSU Special Collections and Archives Research Center



Figure #2—"The Serpentine" – 1941

Alumni Association Photographic Collection (P017:1188), courtesy OSU Special Collections and Archives Research Center



Figure #3—“Junior Weekend Carnival” – c.1940s
Alumni Association Photographic Collection (P017:1894), courtesy OSU Special Collections and Archives
Research Center



Figure #4—“Homecoming House Sign” – date unknown
P025:001, courtesy OSU Special Collections and Archives Research Center

APPENDIX C - MASCOTS
See bibliography for image citations

The athletic team names are not to be confused with the team mascots, at least until the 1940s. The first football team was commonly known as the “Hayseeds,” “Aggies,” “Agrics,” or “Farmers.” Within a few years, “Aggies” prevailed. By 1908, “Beavers” began to be used interchangeably by “Aggies.”⁷⁴ The “Orangemen” also enjoyed sporadic use, and all three terms clearly identified the same school’s athletic teams. Not to be confused with the athletic team names, the school mascot has a separate history. In relation to athletic team names, the school’s mascot could be comparable to a elementary school class adopting a class pet as the “mascot” for the class.

The mascot lineage at Oregon State is complex and diverse; the school has claimed five official mascots (one with at least three major versions), and one unofficial mascot.

“Jimmie the Coyote”

Jimmie (or “Jimmy” depending on the source) was the school’s first mascot. Not much is known about Jimmie except that he was the real pet of M. H. Kriebel, an ardent fan of S.A.C.’s first football team. Some credit his establishment as mascot to 1893, while others claim 1892. While there is no concrete evidence to suggest either, both make sense; 1892 brought President Bloss and a sudden shift towards school spirit, while 1893 brought the first football team. Until doing research for this appendix, the only known materials involving Jimmie were housed in the archives of Oregon State University.⁷⁵ Found in the Corvallis Gazette in an article from December 22, 1893, we now have a picture of a Jimmie’s likeness with the caption “The Mascot.”



“John Richard Newton Bell”

Dr. Bell was such a popular fan of the Orangemen that he was officially adopted as their mascot. He developed a known tradition of throwing his hat into the Mary’s River after every football victory over arch-rival Oregon, attracting a large crowd to the event. While many sources indicate an early 1900s start-date, Bell claimed 1893 as the start to his reign as mascot.⁷⁶ Since his hat-throwing antics did not begin until the first Civil War in 1894, he likely had a faulty memory or interpreted the term “official mascot” differently than O.A.C.



he
well-
his

⁷⁴ Historians agree that “Beavers” dates back at least to the 1920s, primarily because the 1920s marks the first use of a physical beaver mascot. Some historians, especially in the last few decades, argue that the term was used at least by the 1910s, as evidenced by oral accounts and the yearbook titles. During the course of my research, I found reference to the beavers in the proper context used in multiple articles in 1908. See “Whitman Comes to Defeat OAC” and “The Beaver Spirit,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Nov. 18, 1908.

⁷⁵ George P. Edmonston Jr., “Part 5 of 20: A History of Athletic Mascots at Oregon State University,” *Oregon State University Alumni Association*, Feb. 16, 2001 (accessed Mar. 5, 2012), <http://alumni.oregonstate.edu/eclips/history/sportshistory05>.

⁷⁶ “J.R.N. Bell, Mascot, Voices His Pleasure,” Mar. 6, 1922. Memorabilia Collection (MC- Bell, John Richard Newton), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

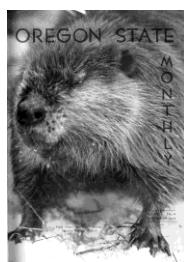
“The Bulldog”

Contrary to rumor, the Bulldog was never a mascot of Oregon Agricultural College, although it did play a prominent role in the mascot lineage. The wrestling coach owned a bulldog, which was unofficially adopted as the mascot for individual teams, most commonly wrestling. While enjoying popularity, the Bulldog never officially represented the school.

“The Beaver Statue”

A 700-pound bronze statue of a beaver served as the school mascot in the 1920s. The beaver was transported on a wooden cart and became an important part of athletics and school spirit.

“Bevo and Billy Beaver”



Students found six-month-old Bevo in the Mary’s River, stuck in an eddy. After nurturing him back to health, Bevo became the school mascot before being stolen shortly thereafter. Billy was introduced as the school mascot in 1935 and was featured on the cover of the *Oregon Stater*. He succumbed to illness and did within a year or two of being named the mascot. Animations depicting beavers in the following decade were based off of Billy and can be seen on cheerleading uniforms in many yearbooks in the 1940s.

Benny Beaver

Benny got his start in the 1940s as the paper mache replica of the 1920s Beaver Statue. After several vandalism incidents, Benny met his demise after meeting an hammer wielded by an unfriendly fan or student, presumably (but never proven) to be from rival University of Oregon. After his death, Benny’s name lived on as a pseudonym in the “Gnawed Log” *Barometer* column. The naming for Benny is attributed to “Pappy” Ben Schermerhorn (class of 1945), although apart from an article in the *Barometer*, this claim is unverified.⁷⁷



Benny returned in 1952 when Ken Austin, a member of the rally squad, made the costume with help from a Portland costume shop, and with guidance from Yell King Bill Sundstrom, his fellow fraternity brother. Apart from Cal’s Yoski Bear (the inspiration for Benny), no other mascots on the west coast involved a person inside a costume, with the exception of “human” mascots such as the University of Southern California Trojan and the Stanford Indian.⁷⁸



Benny underwent several transitions in the following decades as costumes wore out and marketing strategies changed. Benny’s most-extreme changes happened in the early 1980s and in the last several years. In the early 1980s, he gained some weight, a larger smile, and a wife, Bernice. More recently, a series of “angry beaver” designs took over, first in 1999, and then again in 2005 with a version intended to be more kid-friendly.⁷⁹ As of the writing of this paper, the 2005 version is the current mascot.

⁷⁷ “A Reception for Benny,” *Daily Barometer* (Corvallis, OR), Oct. 12, 1945.

⁷⁸ Ken Austin in discussion with the author, February 2012.

⁷⁹ Kyle O’Degard, “A new ‘Benny’ fit for young beavers,” *Corvallis Gazette-Times* (Corvallis, OR), Nov. 12, 2008.

Bibliography

(Newspaper articles and personal interviews omitted)

Pre-World War I until World War II

Bennett, Tom. "Mystery of the Tabletops." *The Oregon Stater*, October 1995.

Edmonston, George P. Jr. "Part 5 of 20: A History of Athletic Mascots at Oregon State University." *Oregon State University Alumni Association*. Feb. 16, 2001 (accessed Mar. 5, 2012). <http://alumni.oregonstate.edu/eclips/history/sportshistory05>.

Ewer, Bernard C. *College Study & College Life*. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1917.

Gates, Charles M. "Early Athletics at the University of Washington." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1961): 99-107.

Gearhart, Dick. *Orange & Black*. Corvallis: Oregon State College Alumni Association, 1938.

Heartwell, James C. *The History of Oregon State College Basketball 1901-02—1952-53*. Corvallis: Cascade Printing Company, 1953.

Hutton, Burton S. "The Student Handbook and Rook Bible of the Oregon State Agricultural College." Student Handbook, Corvallis, 1925.

Krause, Betsy. "Traditions." *The Oregon Stater*, June 1989.

Memorabilia Collection (MC-Tradition), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Stern, Robert. "The Development of An Interorganizational Control Network: The Case of Intercollegiate Athletics," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1979)

World War II and the second post-war period

Bennett, Tom. "Mystery of the Tabletops." *The Oregon Stater*, October 1995.

Heartwell, James C. *The History of Oregon State College Basketball 1901-02—1952-53*. Corvallis: Cascade Printing Company, 1953.

Anti-Establishment and beyond

Krause, Betsy. "Traditions." *The Oregon Stater*, June 1989.

Welsch, Jeff, and George P. Edmonston Jr. *Tales from Oregon State Sports*. Online: Sports Publishing L.L.C., 2003.

Sources Consulted but not Cited

The Beaver, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *The Oregon State yearbook collection, also called The Hayseed and The Orange in some years. Numerous volumes referenced.*

Collisson, Craig, “The fight to legitimize blackness: How black students changed the university.” Doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 2008.

Betzel, Irwin, Scrapbook, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *The epigraph comes from this scrapbook and quotes the first school cheer, “Zip Bam Bee.” Irwin Betzel was a student in the 1910s.*

Edwards, G. Thomas. *The Triumph of Tradition: The Emergence of Whitman College 1859-1924*. Walla Walla: Whitman College, 1992.

McAlister, Harvey L., Collection, Scrapbook, 1893-1897, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Memorabilia Collection, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *The Memorabilia Collection is a set of 172 separate subject folders containing newspaper clippings and other files. Folders consulted include:*

- Basketball – History
- Benny the Beaver
- OAC Courses
- OAC – History of
- OAC Quarter Centennial Celebration
- Yells and Cheers

In-Text Images

Page 5, World War I:

Alumni Association Photographic Collection (P017:0824), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *OSU Archives staff believe this is President Kerr addressing the cadets to announce the United States’ declaration of war on Germany, 1917.*

Page 7, Rook Bonfire:

Joe O. Mattson Photographic Collection (P145:010), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *The 1924 Rook Bonfire.*

Page 10, Tug-of-War:

Alumni Association Photographic Collection (P017:0923), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *1950 Tug-of-War, not long*

before Junior Weekend faded into the Junior Carnival.

Page 11, Benny Beaver:

Alumni Association Photographic Collection (P017:0032), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon. *The most widely used image from Benny's 1952 live debut.*

Appendix A:

Burning of the Green:

Stewart, Ivan. *The Beaver 1921*. Corvallis, OR, 1920, 162, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Appendix C:

Jimmie the Coyote:

"The Football Rage, a Brief Review of the Career of the O.A.C. Eleven-Statistics." *Corvallis Gazette* (Corvallis, OR), Dec. 22, 1893.

Dr. J. R. N. Bell:

John Garman Photographic Collection (P095:122), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

"J.R.N. Bell, Mascot, Voices His Pleasure." Mar. 6, 1922. Memorabilia Collection (MC- Bell, John Richard Newton), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Billy Beaver:

"Cover." *The Oregon Stater*, December 1935, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Benny Beaver – 1947:

McCallum, Johnny. "Football Wouldn't Be Same Without the College Mascot." *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Nov. 2, 1947.

Benny Beaver – 1988:

Oregon Stater Photograph Collection (P195:Acc2005:094), Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Corvallis, Oregon.

Special thanks to Elizabeth Nielsen for both her intellectual and material assistance with this project, to the Oregon State Sports Information Office for special access to materials, and to the OSU Special Collections and Archives Research Center.