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WHERE'S BOXER?

The tradition that ran away:

Boxer? Where's Boxer? Where's Boxer?

By Barney Lerten '77

OCTOBER 15, 1969. Some 300 Pacific students, faculty members and families gathered to observe a national moratorium on the war in Vietnam with a candle-light peace march.

The marchers gathered behind the gym and sang a John Lennon song heard often that year: "All We Are Saying, Is Give Peace A Chance."

OCTOBER 16, 1969. Members of Alpha Zeta threw 20 pounds of 400-year-old bronze from an ambulance into the Marsh Hall parking lot, triggering a traditional, very unpeaceful "riot" that spilled across the campus for four hours.

By 1:30 p.m., Boxer — a piece of metal that symbolized one of Pacific's oldest traditions — had worked its way into the trunk of Pacific student Dennis (Moses) Williams '72.

A subsequent column in the Index by Carl Gables, drew a comparison between the widely contrasting peace moratorium and the Boxer throw-out, commenting that "the Boxer throw-out wasn't a war. But it was close enough to demonstrate the futility and meaninglessness of war — people fighting over objects and ideologies that have no meaning beyond the continuation of useless tradition."

Gables concluded "it ought to be possible for the students of an academic institution to find something more meaningful to hold them together than a periodic battle over a useless piece of bronze. It's time

man outgrew war. It's time Pacific outgrew Boxer."

1969 — an involved year of protests and conflicts, racial and political. Tradition was not a very honored thing during the turbulent sixties.

Have conditions changed, or has Pacific really "outgrown Boxer?"

In 1971, an Index headline read "Boxer Flash is Dead!" Phil Miner '72, then president of the Black Student Union, put it quite bluntly: "We're never going to flash it. The tradition of Boxer is defunct." Another BSU member spoke out, saying "this is one morbid, barbaric tradition which must be brought to a halt — now!"

The rumors about the fate of Boxer at the time included that the ancient mascot would be melted down and remolded into black power medallions, or be reshaped into the form of a panther. Moses Williams said in 1971 that the figurine was in Germany, serving as a symbol of crippled children on a military base. Williams claimed that Boxer would eventually be brought back and either sold or thrown out again.

The 70 years preceding the last public viewing of Boxer were filled with schemes, pranks, unforgettable episodes, hundreds of "flashes" (when Boxer is seen but not up for grabs), and throw-outs (when an organization relinquishes possession).

On a spring morning in 1900, a chapel speaker told of an eastern university which had a foreign idol as its mascot. That same day, Boxer was spirited away by Richard Faulkner '02, beginning the tradi-

tion which has entered into a long, uncertain pause.

More than six years after the last throw-out, Boxer is still in hiding — quite possibly for good.

Many other rumors have circulated as to the whereabouts of Boxer. Some say he is in the San Francisco area (one rumor even puts him at the bottom of San Francisco bay), other claim it is still in or around Forest Grove.

Although the students involved in the last throw-out are all departed, many Pacific administrators, faculty members and others have fond memories of the bronze idol — not to mention the many alumni who longed to touch and keep Boxer for their own group or club.

Two alums who have recollections about Boxer are now part of Pacific's university relations staff. Vangie (Morgan '50) Matta remembers when the mascot was shown at a sorority breakfast. "One of the fellows who was going with a Philo told us that if we wouldn't make any commotion or try to get Boxer he would bring it to the breakfast, which was on May Day.

"Miss Margaret Henman '91 just screamed when she saw Boxer come in, and tears streamed from her face and her hands just shook! Boxer was put on the table in front of her, and the tears just streamed, and soon everyone else was getting tearful. All of us were allowed to go over and touch the dog.

"That was kind of a nostalgic moment that was opposed to all the slaughter that we saw on the campus when they had a flash."

Another university relations

worker, George Horner '44, tells when he crossed paths with Boxer: "During my senior year, my good buddy Ernie Gettle '47 and I got hold of it. We were asked by some sweet little gals from Kappa Delta sorority if we would bring the dog over to Dr. Price's home on the south side of town (Price was then head of Pacific's math department), and we did as the ladies asked.

"So all the Kappas stood around and oohed and aahed over Boxer in the candlelight. Soon, I had the feeling it was time to get out of there. We grabbed the dog and

threw a blanket over it, and as we walked out — I don't think I've ever seen so many citizens come out of the brush in my life!

"I sprinted for Ernie's old Model A Ford sedan and threw the dog on the floor, jumped in behind the dog and locked all four doors. The crowd was rocking the car back and forth, and Ernie was shouting 'If you break any windows I'll break your heads!

"Luckily, one of the ladies called Mac Hall, got hold of a buddy of mine. He brought his old Plymouth over, and the next thing I knew, here came a set of lights behind me,

there's a heck of a bang, and we were bumper to bumper and rocketing down the street! I was in the back seat with Boxer, with the car running wild, and down the road we went . . ."

Peter Truax '69, now at Pacific as a graduate student, was head of the Gamma Sigma fraternity when that group decided to throw out Boxer in April of 1968. Truax tells of riding in from Hillsboro with Boxer in the trunk of a car with Mrs. Russell Roberts and Myrtle Ferm Smith '21.

"Students ringed the entire Marsh hall parking lot, as we had



put in the bulletin that we would be throwing out Boxer that day. A lot of people thought the two ladies were crazy for driving into this maelstrom. There was a method to their madness, as I was in the trunk with Boxer.

"They were backing around, and being the butt of some rather inane jokes about these two old ladies who didn't know what was going on. All of a sudden, I threw the lid open, tossed out the dog and the fight was on!"

The fight lasted over six hours, ending as a member of Phi Beta Tau, Wayne Stovall '68 put Boxer in his car and tore out of Forest Grove down the Wilson River Highway, with the AZs and Gammas in pursuit. As luck would have it, Stovall's car broke down, and the AZs came up with the Boxer.

These are just some of the personal experiences that Pacific students and faculty have had with a little dog whose past dates back to the Ming Dynasty in China almost 400 years ago. To many, Boxer — and the proud possession of it — is an important symbol of Pacific's past.

Truax explains it this way: "There is a lot of talk that students really don't care, but it is a part of the university history. A lot of people say it's a bunch of nonsense. When you get something that ties the school as closely together as a Boxer throw-out does, it's something that you really can't describe. There was a great feeling of spirit and unity within the Pacific family.

"The day we threw it out, there were a lot of people glad to see it, and who felt — and this sounds trite — close to everybody else . . . part of an experience that is unique to Pacific University."

In the fall of 1971, Miner expressed a somewhat more tempered view than his "no more flash" statement earlier in the year. "It might not be a bad idea to bring out Boxer

again this year. Last year there were some pretty negative comments concerning it from BSU members, but with the new members we have this year, I think there is definitely a possibility."

Miner continued, "The BSU feels that something more constructive could be done with Boxer, maybe in the form of a competition, with the winner gaining possession of it. Owing Boxer ought to be an honor, not something you have to fight for . . . But until someone comes up with an idea of what should be done with it, I think we might as well hang on to it."

No public statement about Boxer's whereabouts has ever followed.

As far as Pacific staff members know, those who spirited Boxer away six years ago have "hung on to it" — and most of the rumors probably have no factual basis. Jim Crossland '72, now living in Forest Grove, claims to have seen Boxer this past June on the Berkeley campus of the University of Califor-

nia, being held by former Pacific students — names unknown — who were holding on to it for Moses Williams.

Present students at Pacific are divided on whether the tradition of Boxer was worth the violence that it precipitated. The BSU has gone through many positive changes, and is now known as the Concerned Black Students of Pacific (CBS).

The present head of CBS is Carmon Cunningham, a senior majoring in business, and he claims little knowledge of Boxer. "We as an organization have never discussed our feelings about Boxer — we're busy doing other things."

Asked his personal views, Cunningham says "I can see it as a tradition, but I'm totally opposed to the type of things it caused. It wasn't beneficial to anyone. Myself and others have personally asked around and tried to find out who had Boxer, and every time we brought it up it was like it was something hush-hush — taboo — you didn't talk about it.

"It was only a few people among



Boxer pictured with a pre-Watergate Richard Nixon. Have the times in which we live left Boxer behind?



that class, and only they know, and they aren't talking — to anyone. If some investigators found out who had the dog, and wanted us to act as a liaison, I think our organization might be willing to try to do that, saying that it would be beneficial — if the alumni gave some organization such as Sickle Cell Anemia or the Black Educational College Fund a certain amount of dollars . . . but only if it would be helpful — that's the main point.

"But why bring back violence here?"

Those involved in past Boxer skirmishes argue that it wasn't all that violent, other than an occasional bloody nose or sprained arm. Boxer has been out of circulation for a

while before, but this six-year span is the longest yet.

"Boxer may have been thrown out for the last time into the chasm between generations and changing values." So ended that 1971 "Boxer Flash is Dead" Index story. Five years have passed, and values continue to change. Many hope that George Horner is correct when he says "I think the students are ready for this, with their increased interest in Homecoming, the noise parade . . . I hope it shows up."

The time Boxer was encased in a giant chunk of ice . . . the homecoming game where it was dangled above the crowd on a rope from a plane . . . these and other memories are part of the past of Pacific. Many

alums have tried to piece together the puzzle of Boxer's whereabouts, and for the most part have come up empty-handed.

Perhaps the answer lies in a comment from BSU president Phil Miner four years ago: "I think it should be somewhere on campus where everyone, visitors as well as students, could see it."

An historical lobby is being planned for the "new" Marsh Hall. A safely encased Boxer sitting proudly in that lobby is possible.

Two questions to answer: where's Boxer, and what do we do when we find him?

Perhaps if we answer the latter question, the first one will solve itself.