

BOXER

A Mixed Tradition

by CHARLOTTE FILER

To hold? To toss? Fun? Injuries? Campus spirit? Bad impressions?
Referees? More rules? A treasure hunt?

Who is inspiring these questions? It's Boxer, Pacific's long-time symbol of spirit and since 1967-68 the campus mascot.

Boxer, as recast in 1983, made his appearance at homecoming with a fight following and concerns that someone might be seriously hurt sometime in a Boxer toss. It should be pointed out for alumni who haven't heard that the original more than 400 year old Boxer from the Ming Dynasty has been missing since 1969 after 73 years at Pacific. The current Boxer is a good replica of the real thing and creates the same mixed feelings.

The Pacific Index, student newspaper, in an editorial after the homecoming toss said, "Instead of fun the crowd was shown an amazing display of obnoxious behavior." The editorial ended with some alternatives to a Boxer toss and fight -- "...a Boxer Olympics, where groups compete in a contest for Boxer, or a Boxer Treasure Hunt, where clues would be given as to the whereabouts of Boxer until it is found."

John Rodgers '75 of Forest Grove wrote a letter after homecoming which marked the first time he had ever seen Boxer. He has long wondered why anyone would participate in "such a potentially brutal exercise" as a Boxer toss. He closed his letter, "...I was happy to get inside the University Center and remember better times with my contemporaries."

Later this writer talked by telephone with Norm Weis '63 of Kent, Washington, who expressed a different view. "Boxer is a valuable tradition. Cuts and scratches from a Boxer toss were a badge of honor in my day," he said. "Getting your nose bloody was worth it if you would get Boxer."

Weis tried but was never a holder of Boxer during his student days. However, even before he was a Pacific student, he had Boxer in his home. A friend, Dalton LaRue '60, who was then at Pacific, brought Boxer to the Weis home one day, so Norm had an early introduction to the Boxer mystique. LaRue now lives in Ione.

In another telephone interview, Tom Stearms '70 of Beaverton, expressed a liking for the Boxer spirit but not for the fighting. "Boxer himself is great, a but the fighting is a tradition long past its time," he said. He gave some interesting information that most on campus had forgotten, but that *Pacific Today* confirmed in another conversation.

Stearns reported that faculty members such as Miles Shishido, the late Charlie Trombley '52, and Frank Buckiewicz '53 would be referees for a Boxer toss and would "keep things from getting out of hand."

Shishido was asked about this and remembered clearly that he was a referee for several Boxer tosses. He added the name of Dan French '56, MS '64, then a faculty member, to those who "refereed" with him.

Remembering those days, Shishido said that the group who was going to toss Boxer would notify him and the other referees in advance as to when and where, and the faculty referees would be there to keep order and cool things down. "There probably should be referees now, and I would do it again," Shishido declared.

The day before homecoming this year, Karen Shield, curator of the Pacific Museum, invited alums to share with current students some of their experiences with Boxer. This was video taped and played back during homecoming. Copies of this tape can be made for interested alumni. Keep watching *Pacific Today* for more details.

James Tumbleson '29 of Forest Grove told about his class possession of Boxer, including missing parts. The home of the late Mrs. Harry Giltner was Boxer's hiding place many times after a flash. At one time President Dobbs asked Tumbleson and his friends to loan Boxer to him for a faculty dinner at his home. The president guaranteed "the safety of the Dog at the door."

Tumbleson also wrote his Boxer stories for Pacific. In this rendition he said, "It has been meaningful to have been a part of a great tradition that still lives on."

Julia Tomlinson Cook '40 of Lincoln City displayed much fondness for Boxer and remembered his attendance at a banquet in Portland. She recited that when students would return to campus in the fall, the question often asked among friends was "Have you seen Boxer yet?"

Al Lemcke '36 came from Vancouver, Washington, with many Boxer memories. He told how a group of Pacific students obtained Boxer from an alumnus school teacher in Clatskanie without the teacher knowing that Boxer was gone. The group took Boxer to the Oregonian office in Portland where the late L.H. Gregory '10, long-time *Oregonian* sports editor, wrote a story and had a photo taken for the next day's *Oregonian*. The school teacher in Clatskanie was shocked when he read the *Oregonian* that morning. He thought Boxer was still safely stored in his car.

Alice Hoskins '56 of Forest Grove and a Pacific staff member, remembered the weekend in the early '50's when she went home to Vernonia and was so disappointed when she came back to campus to learn that she had missed a Boxer flash. Within a few minutes, however, she found that the large overstuffed chair she was sitting on had Boxer stuffed under the big pillow.

She was thrilled then and was equally thrilled in the spring of 1983 when one of her sons, Bruce Fleskes '87, was the student who cut Boxer from a tree on campus where Boxer had been mysteriously chained. This was the first appearance on campus of the "new Boxer."

Among others sharing their stories at this pre-homecoming gathering were Art Brachmann '34 of Forest Grove and Gary Mueller '57 of Hillsboro and now a Pacific art professor.

Two other stories from past issues of *Pacific Today* are worth sharing again for the poignancy and humor --

In the early 1950's or late 1940's Boxer was a guest at a Philo sorority breakfast. "Miss Margaret Hinman, class of 1891, just screamed when she saw Boxer come in, and tears streamed down her face and her hands just shook!...soon everyone else was getting tearful." Reprinted from *Pacific Today*, Winter, 1976.

And, then in 1968 -- "Nobody knew how Boxer would arrive...but when an automobile entered the main campus driveway, the crowd braced itself for the big moment.

"As it turned the corner into the Marsh Hall parking lot, the gathering broke into polite laughter. It was just Mrs. Myrtle Smith, dean of women and widow of Dr. D. Otis Smith, the long-time head of the department of history. With her was Mrs. Russell Roberts, wife of the English department chairman. The two elderly ladies circled the lot in apparent confusion, to the continued entertainment of the students.

"But suddenly the automobile stopped and out of the trunk jumped Gamma Sigma President Pete Truax '69 with Boxer." -- From *Pacific Today*, July, 1968.

In the past 12 years this writer has interviewed and talked with many Pacific alumni. Nearly all of them would mention Boxer, usually in happy, fond terms. Boxer is a part of Pacific.

Pacific people today will have to decide how their generation will keep the Boxer faith and preserve the spirit. Alumni are invited to send *Pacific Today* their helpful ideas and views.

Long live Boxer!