

Fraternities battled over 'Boxer' mascot

Eastwood's store was hiding place

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last in a series of articles written by Edith Heisler about longtime Forest Grove resident Clarence Eastwood, who shares his memories of growing up in the area. Heisler also is a resident of Forest Grove.)

By EDITH HEISLER
For the Times

Clarence Eastwood's store was known as the Gamma Sigma store. Hughes Confectionary was known as the AZ store.

The Gamma Sigmas and the AZs were the two largest fraternities on the Pacific University campus, and the main contenders for possession of the "Boxer."

The original Boxer was an incense-burning idol made of bronze. It looked somewhat like an ugly dog. It sat more than 350 years at the door of a temple in China.

A missionary, Doctor J.E. Walker, brought it to Forest Grove in 1896. It was given to Pacific University by his mother, Mary Richardson Walker. In 1906, it became the university mascot and the "battles" began.

The 18-inch statue has been hidden in many places around Forest Grove and even taken overseas. Several times Boxer fell into the hands of coeds. Because of fights over its possession, it required several "surgeries."

After a "throwout" in 1969, the original Boxer left the campus and has not returned. (It now has been recast.)

One afternoon a couple of Gamma Sigma brothers came into the store and asked Eastwood if they could hide the Boxer there. Eastwood didn't want it in the store for he knew if word got out that it was there, his store would be taken apart in a search for it.

After a promise by the boys that no one would know, he hid the Boxer in an opening under the floor.

For several months tension mounted. Each time he was asked by an A.Z. if he knew the whereabouts of the Boxer, he evaded the question or tried to throw them off track.

Toward spring, Eastwood asked the Gamma Sigma boys to remove the statue. They came about midnight and took it away. They "flashed" the Boxer about two weeks later and as usual there was bloodshed. (Flashing, or a throwout was done by showing the Boxer or tossing it into the air and fighting for its possession.) Sometimes girls joined the fight and proved themselves to be as competitive as the boys.



photo courtesy of Washington County Museum

Boxer mascot was prized possession

Once a salesman came to the confectionary. He was selling chocolates. Inside the chocolates was Canadian whiskey. Eastwood bought some and sold them for 50 cents apiece. Word got around town and the chocolates became so popular that he decided to stop ordering them for fear he would get caught. Some of the local businessmen had been his best customers.

During World War II both sugar and cream were in short supply. Ice cream was mostly frozen milk. Gasoline, shoes, tires and products of many kinds were rationed.

Everyone joined in helping the war effort. Citizens took turns in the lookout tower working for civil defense. Drapes were closed at night and the few cars traveling on the roads were driven with their headlights almost completely blacked out so they would not reflect light and be spotted by enemy aircraft. Drives for lard, scrap metal and nylons were organized. Forest Grove always went over its quota.

One day a man from the draft board called. "Do you want to go to war or work in the shipyard?" he asked Eastwood.

"Who's going to feed my kids?" replied Eastwood, who by then had three children.

"You are," the man on the phone said. "Report to the shipyards tomorrow."

Eastwood worked in Portland at the shipyards for four years. He worked on the graveyard shift and commuted by bus. During that time he kept the store open by getting only four to five hours sleep each day.

In 1945, the man from whom Eastwood was renting the confectionary wanted to sell it to him, along with some of the other buildings in the same block. The cost was too high.

Eastwood closed the confectionary and sold the soda fountain to Mr. Freid, who owned the Forest Grove Cafe and the Viking Inn. Iron pipes were used to move the marble fountain down Main Street to Pacific Avenue to its new home.

By this time, the Eastwood's three children were in their teens. Bob was 16 and was spending his summers working for the forestry. He and another boy were in the lookout tower during a fire that devastated a large portion of timber. They were lucky to get out before the fire engulfed the tower.

Janice was 15. She was working at the Forest Grove Cafe during the summer and after school.

Clarence Jr. was 13. He had a summer job picking berries.

When Eastwood's mother died in 1947, Clarence Eastwood, his wife and their children moved into the house his mother had occupied.

For a while Eastwood worked at a sawmill on Seger Road. Later he worked at Kercher's sawmill until it closed in 1949. He soon got a job working for Stimson in the hardboard plant. He worked there for 16 years until he retired in 1965.

Eastwood sold a large part of his property to Wallace Smith who lived on Main Street. It was his understanding that the land would be used to expand Smith's berry field. Instead, he sold it

to John Van Doren and John Cameron. A cement plant has occupied the site since 1946.

Though Eastwood has seen many changes in his lifetime, the three houses on North A Street stand sturdy, looking much as they did when his father built them.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, all the rain . . .

Robert Eastwood never returned to South Dakota. The green mountains, good crops, beautiful flowers and the lure of the Pacific Ocean captured his heart.

Oregon became his home. He found the perfect place to raise a son.

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