

When Boxer was flashed in public, hundreds of Pacific students would converge on the statue and fight for physical possession of it for sometimes hours at a time. Pictured is one of the last "Boxer Tosses" before the statue's body finally disappeared in the late 1960s.



Pacific University Archives

Boxer's tail, foot, ear await body at Pacific

By Deborah Bloom
Forest Grove Leader

The bronzed, grooved figurine tail might not look like much, but even after 45 years, Pacific University alumnus Don Metzger felt uneasy about giving it back.

"You think people are just going to grab it from you and run with it, like they did in the '60s," Metzger said. "That was just the nature of Boxer."

The tail is part of the larger Pacific University mascot: the Boxer statue, a highly coveted object that has been a part of university lore and a source of school spirit and raucousness at the campus for more than a century.

Metzger returned to the Pacific campus in July to give Boxer's tail back in person. He said he had attempted to return the tail back in 1970, when he sent it to a former classmate who was working at Pacific's optometry school. Seven years later, the post office contacted Metzger to inform him the tail had been sitting in a recovery station outside of Dallas, Texas. The tail was then returned to Metzger, who held on to it for decades.

Metzger said he acquired the Boxer tail at a poker game when he was a student at Pacific in the mid-1960s. After a night of drinking and



Pacific University alumnus Don Metzger recently returned the tail of the legendary Boxer, which he won at a poker game. Only a hoof and an ear had been recovered since the bronze statue disappeared in 1969. The hoof is on display in Washbourne Hall.

Michal Thompson
Forest Grove Leader

BOXER IN PIECES

Continued from Page 1

cards, Metzger and a friend were the last two men standing. His friend went to a back room and returned with the Boxer tail, then put it on the table. Once his friend passed out, Metzger took the tail back home.

"I expected the next morning I'd have people knocking my door down," Metzger said. "But nothing ever happened, and as time passed, I kept my mouth shut."

At the time, having the Boxer statue – even a piece of it – in one's possession meant a fair amount of risk. The statue has been a hot commodity throughout most of the school's history.

The tradition of stealing Boxer began in 1900, four years after the statue was given to the university by the mother of an alumnus who had brought it home from China. The university displayed Boxer at the front of the school's chapel, but a student swiped it, claiming it belonged to his class.

Boxer was returned, but disappeared again in 1908. Any time a campus group obtained the statue, the



Pacific University Archives

In this 1950s photo, students are struggling for the Boxer statue after it fell out of a melting block of ice that was suspended in a tree on campus.

"I'm just happy it's back there. And hopefully, if the body is still available, somebody will be inspired to bring that back as well."

Don Metzger

Pacific University alumnus

tradition was to wait a few weeks and "flash" Boxer in a public setting. Each time, this caused pandemonium, as students would clamor to gain possession, often unsuccessfully.

The tail was separated from the body as early

as 1911 in a class scrimmage for the Boxer statue. These fights, what students called "scrumms" and "Boxer tosses" would last for hours, with hundreds of students scrambling and piling on top of one another, struggling for possession.

In 1929, one scrum lasted for nine hours.

"They were serious about it," said Noel Eng, class of 1962. "The Boxer tosses kept going for decades. ... It was always a big scramble."

Different classes would repeatedly weld the statue together, but with each scrum came another appendage breaking. In the 1960s, Boxer's ear and

front leg were broken off, and the mascot's torso became the most enviable appendage among students.

Those lucky enough to take possession of Boxer — often the fraternities or clubs who managed to secure the mascot through teamwork — would invent ways to flash Boxer while still maintaining possession.

Willard Bleything, class of 1951, now an optometry professor at his alma mater, described the most original flash he had seen. A group of students froze Boxer's body inside a 50-pound block of ice and hung it from a tree. Students eagerly waited below for the ice to melt.

"People would build human pyramids to try to get it down," Bleything said.

Once the ice melted, Boxer was retrieved and a scrum ensued.

Steve Dustrude, from the class of 1973, described another antic that took place at a football game, at which Boxer was lowered by rope from a helicopter. Students rushed the field, but the helicopter flew off.

"It was very unifying," Dustrude said with a grin. "It was a unique activity for the student body. It definitely brought us to-

gether."

The tosses ended in 1969 after Boxer's body disappeared. Campus lore has it that a student group took it, said university spokesman Joe Lang. The statue's body has not been seen on campus since.

Though no serious injuries ever resulted from Boxer tosses, many alumni reported seeing people leave scrums with the occasional bloody nose or bruise.

Decades later, with a piece of Boxer still in his possession, Metzger knew he faced no risk of getting tackled. Nonetheless, he was conditioned to expect a brawl when the statue appeared in the open.

"But they didn't grab it from me," Metzger said of returning the tail to university officials. "They were just really thankful I gave it back."

The university is holding Boxer's tail, along with the statue's foot and ear, in an undisclosed location. Metzger hopes his return of the tail will prompt others to do likewise.

"I'm just happy it's back there," Metzger said. "And hopefully, if the body is still available, somebody will be inspired to bring that back as well."

Deborah Bloom: 503-294-4015;
dbloom@forestgroveleader.com