

The Wonderful World of Boxer

Man consists of body, mind, and imagination. His body is faulty, his mind untrustworthy, but his imagination has made him remarkable. In some centuries, his imagination has made life on this planet an intense practice of all the lovelier energies.

Shakespeare and Spiritual Life

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When I was a young sprout growing up in the San Francisco Bay area, we heard and read much about "The Ax," a trophy of long established rivalry between Stanford and the University of California.

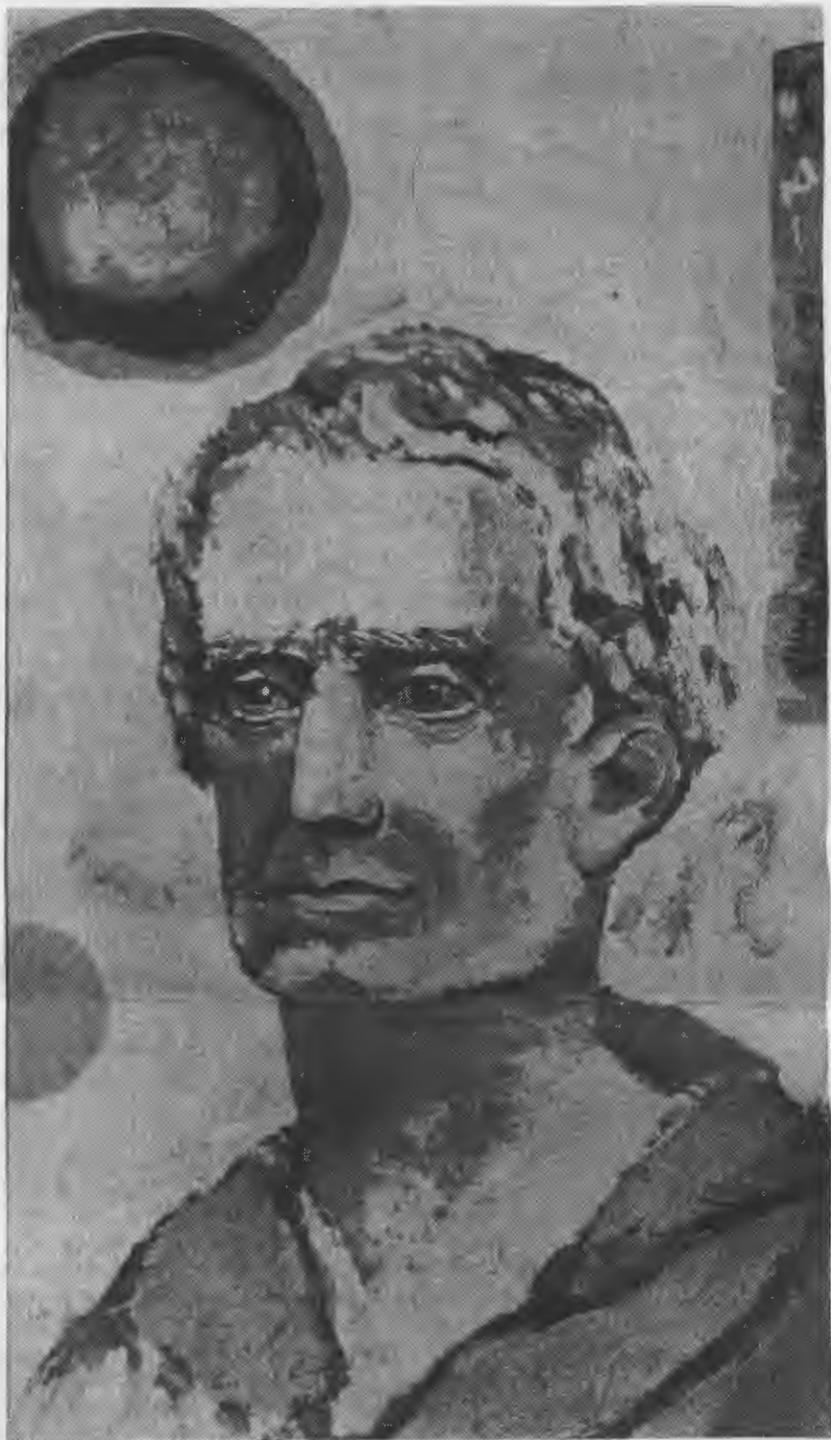
Periodically there were fullscale free-for-alls between rival student bodies for possession of The Ax, which legend has it was swiped one dark night by the Golden Bears from the hallowed halls of Stanford. It always cropped up around Big Game time, accompanied by flying fists and bruised shins not only on the campuses but in the streets of Berkeley and San Francisco, which brought bold black headlines in the city papers and remarks about "those crazy college kids."



In those days my dream — and that of every other youngster in the Bay Area — was someday to get possession of The Ax. This would have been impossible at best, since I never was much for the rough-and-tumble. But circumstances carried me to Oregon and Pacific University, and the dream had to be put aside. However, a few years later I did actually get my hands on the seemingly unattainable mas-



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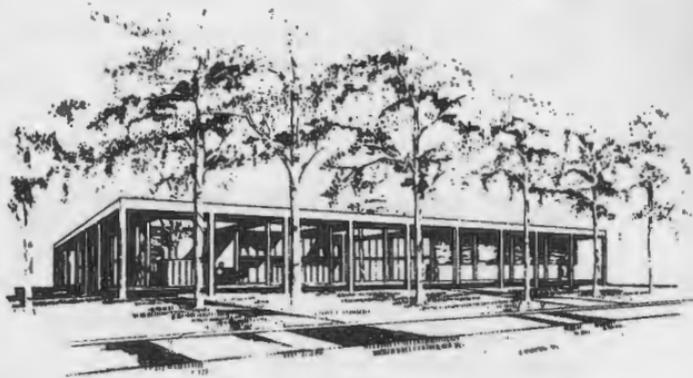


cot Boxer, had my picture taken with him, and "scooped the world" including my own staff in the Pacific Index by announcing the return of the beloved incense burner to the campus after a long absence. By then, Boxer was on a par with The Ax for me, so what more could I ask of my college days?

Since that time, The Ax has degenerated into a placid trophy, exchanged solemnly to the victor of the annual gridiron war to display safely until the following year, without benefit of bloodied noses and blackened eyes. Across this nation many other such legendary trophies of campus life have fallen by the wayside.

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A university center is a place where minds and imagination meet to explore, expand and make new thoughts. The reality of a university center comes after the dreaming, planning and concrete . . . when its inhabitants, men and women, give it meaning. Participation . . . from laying the mortar to seeding new grass . . . in the process of making an environment for imagination is a worthy achievement in the progress of civilization. Washburne Hall, *University Center*, Pacific University, is such an achievement.



In this contribution to building a place for minds of men the following have participated:

Hewlett & Jamison, Architects, Portland, Oregon.
Fuiten's Plumbing & Heating, Forest Grove, Oregon.

Pacific Asbestos & Supply Company, Portland, Oregon.
J. Donald Kroeker & Associates, Consulting Engineers,

Portland, Oregon. Contract Hardware, Inc., Portland
Oregon. Portland Athletic Supply, Portland, Oregon

Boxer is unique, perhaps the last of his kind, still able with his infectious grin to spark more than a tip of the hat whenever he shows his barbaric countenance. That such a truthfully ugly idol of foreign and ancient design should become the cherished symbol of a dignified university is in itself a source for no little amazement. Yet there he is — bold, bronze and battered.

Longevity of Boxer

Even more astounding is that Boxer is, around after more than half a century, and is still of an explosive nature. There is no earthly reason why he should be, by bland present-day standards. Yet he still holds a spell over his subjects, as demonstrated in awesome fashion last spring when some 900 students kicked, gouged, tackled, punched and cursed during one of the most rousing Boxer battles in many years. But doesn't it strike you rather odd that in all the years and all the wild brawls and chases, some greedy misguided student, alumnus, or fly-by-night employee hasn't retained permanent possession of Boxer or sold him as a collector's item for his appraised value of "at least \$1,500? Or, that when he's been broken into bits, the pieces haven't been lost and discarded? This makes Boxer indeed stand alone.

The answer seems to lie in the deep-rooted loyalty all who have at sometime touched base at Pacific retain for the school beneath the oaks. The experience may have been a brief one. I have talked with onetime students who were there only a short time. Their eyes light up at thoughts of their campus days. Invariably they move the conversation around to Boxer, and their eyes sparkle even more. Embodied in the vision of that ridiculous bronze mutt are all the traditions, hopes and dreams, the gains and defeats, a something lost or never quite completed, the time of youth.

School Rivalry

None of this makes much sense to the outsider, especially in this age of rubber stamp conformity, for Boxer grew to full measure in the era of Rah Rah College Life, racoon coats, rumble seats, and twenty-three-skidoo. He doesn't fit the pattern of the practical present, which, nevertheless, is hard pressed to explain the senseless rioting, violence and destruction by college-age youths in our resort towns.

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If someone asks you "What is Boxer?" and you answer, "The Spirit of Pacific," you will get a raised eyebrow, for that is no answer at all. If you add that the students "fight and die" for possession of this antique incense burner and that no Pacific career is quite complete without having placed an affectionate hand on this embattered body, you have completely confounded your listener. That Boxer is of intra-school rivalry rather than inter-school is itself confusing. That students would bother with him and that the university would tolerate him makes Boxer indeed a puzzlement. More's to their credit, I say, for the fact that Boxer thrives in the Space Age is a heartening sign. It isn't the occasional free-for-all; it's the fact that Boxer is there, alive and kicking and lurking in the campus shadows that's important, for as the rugged "Spirit of Pacific," he symbolizes the time-honored traditions of this and every university. We are today discarding, destroying and debunking too much of our heritage, traditions and landmarks. I like to view Boxer as an outward protest against this kind of thinking, for how can we understand the future if we don't know where we've been?

Came in 1896

Neither Dr. J. E. Walker who smuggled the dog out of China or Richard Faulkner who first swiped him from the college chapel had this in mind. Dr. Walker, a missionary, saw Boxer, in Sachore where he was the household god of a family of apothecaries for some 300 years. Dr. Walker bought the fascinating idol for \$12 and as a token of affection, gave it to his school in 1896. For several years the idol, named for the Boxer Rebellion, held a seat of honor in the chapel, although even then faculty members brought him to college affairs as a sort of mascot.

In 1900 during a chapel talk, a young minister challenged his youthful audience with an

aside remark that were this Amherst, the dog wouldn't be safe on his pedestal. That did it! Dick Faulkner returned during the night for the dog. He ran onto another youth, there for the same purpose, and the first Boxer battle took place in the black hall until the pair realized they were from the same class. Thus Boxer was spirited away to be hidden in a cold air vent while the student body was taken to task by an angry administration.

For years the 25-pound bronze dog was the object of inter-class rivalry. As fraternities grew in importance, Boxer became the object of their affections. To belong to the fraternity holding Boxer was prestige itself; to be able to show him secretly to your girl made many points in your love life. Of course, it also had its hazards. The coeds, unable to take Boxer by brute force, used devious methods known to females through the centuries. On more than one occasion, upon learning the dogs' hiding place from their trusting boyfriends, the girls would lift Boxer in a bold double-cross. This kind of maneuver seldom cemented any lasting relationships, but then as they say, all's fair in love and war.

Hiding Places

Over the decades, Boxer has occupied some mighty strange hiding places because students are always on the prowl for him. I had a roommate who spent over a week's sleepless nights doggedly following a "lead" he had on the dog. He'd return bleary-eyed each morning in time to snore through his classes, then off again on what proved a fruitless search. Boxer has been hidden in cold storage lockers, belfries, attics, wells, sewers, beneath bridges, in trees, ditches, and cemeteries. For an entire summer he was swathed in a gunnysack and suspended by cable in the Willamette River. He's been encased in ice, and has seen the inside of hundreds of suitcases. Legend has it he's seen the world, and flew with American pilots in both world wars. His head, plume tail, legs and torso have parted company numerous times, but somehow always get back to the campus to be welded in place again. Once it took three years of searching to locate his head, found in a housewife's flour sack. His body is battle-scarred and bears the initials of his many masters. An aura of the supernatural surrounds him.

William Jennings Bryan, the great orator and politician, lived to regret his request to see Boxer at a public appearance at Hillsboro. A near riot ensued, bunting was torn to shreds, the platform partly wrecked, and the ruffled Bryan's talk had to be postponed. I recall something similar when a V.S.S. (Very Special Speaker) was addressing a student assembly. The gentleman, a guest of the University President, was very dull, but a Boxer scramble cut him short while his host fumed. Shortly thereafter, it was suggested that Boxer should be permanently retired, but students and faculty turned deaf ears.

Boxer U?

Boxer U?

Thus Boxer is lodged solidly in Pacific life. I doubt that any other university mascot has made such inroads that his saucy silhouette appears on official letterheads, flags, programs, books and pamphlets; which has a service organization called the "Boxerettes," a student directory called "The Pup," and is memorialized in cement with his footprints in the walk before the administration building. There's even been the periodic suggestion to rename the place "Boxer University" to avoid confusion with other Pacific's of the West. I've always felt this had possibilities.

Sometimes Boxer has vanished for years and was thought to be gone forever. The character of the campus visibly changes. Then mysteriously, he bobs up again with no explanation of his wandering whereabouts. Once to prove he was back, Boxer was exhibited in the window of a local bank. Another time he was gone five years, then reappeared at a Homecoming banquet. Faculty members, who seem forever the villains, planned to place him in a vault, but undergrads were tipped off, dropped him through a second story window onto a canvas and saved Boxer from the tomb.

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