

Boxer symbol of PU spirit for 79 years



Boxer — Chinese heirloom

By KATHLEEN JACKSON

Boxer — a 395-year-old bronze Chinese idol — has been a tradition at Pacific for 79 of the school's 125 years. During his association with Pacific, Boxer has been the object of fierce frays as students fought to possess him. Multiple weld jobs reflect the times he has been separated from his appendages and put back together again. Boxer gives his name to Pacific's athletic teams and has long been a symbol of Pacific's spirit.

But Boxer did not start out

Walker's mother and he was set in a place of honor at the front of the chapel. But he was not destined to rest there long. One 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. Thus began one of Pacific's oldest traditions — the struggle for possession of Boxer, the ancient Chinese idol which became Pacific's mascot and symbol of school spirit.

Boxer dropped from sight

picture taken at the 1914 Junior Class Party of Boxer reunited. But the dog was broken apart again within weeks. He was re-welded.

In 1915, Boxer went off to war with a Pacific serviceman who took him to France to watch over Americans fighting in Europe. When he returned home to campus in 1919 there was no fight for once, and no loud welcome. His only appearance that year was at a chapel service in the midst of "Hail, Old Pacific, Hail." No one moved — all stared and went on with the song.

From 1920 to 1929 Boxer's appearances were mostly at small gatherings and meetings. He had his picture taken at the 1926 Wassail Party and disappeared from view after the senior party of that year. He was brought back to to campus again in 1929 and vanished again until 1932. Again in 1933 he dropped from sight, to reappear in 1936.

Then occurred one of the most famous of all Boxer stories. Three men took their girl friends along when they rented a plot in a graveyard and buried Boxer. Wanting a bit of excitement for themselves, the three coeds went home to enlist the aid of the Dean of Students and returned to dig up the dog and move him to a new hiding place. The girls, Laurabelle Boostaver '40, Marjorie Byers '38 and Violet (Soffe '37) Simmons probably lost their boyfriends (Oscar Giesicke '38, Benfield and Gerald Keller '42) in the deal, but gained a temple dog. The first the males knew of the switch was a week later when Boxer was flashed in Herrick Hall. They cried, "Dirty trick!" the Index reported in its March 12, 1937 issue, but the girls replied "poor sports!"

The next day, Boxer was found wrapped in a gunnysack in the basement of Herrick and was taken to the home of Florine Callahan '40 for hiding. On a rumor that the Gammas held the idol.

spirit.
But Boxer did not start out to be Pacific's spirit symbol. That was the result of a series of accidents. For more than three centuries Boxer was the cherished possession of the Laing family of Shaowu, China. His colorful history dates back to 1580 during the Ming dynasty. The tumult of the so-called "Boxer" Rebellion in the late 1800's forced the descendent of the original owner to flee for his life with the treasured reddish-brown figurine clasped in his arms.

Fate made the paths of Boxer's Chinese owner cross with that of Dr. Joseph Elkanah Walker, China missionary and Pacific graduate of 1867. Dr. Walker acquired it for the nominal sum of \$5 from the desperate owner and in the late 1880's sent the bronze figurine with its triangle horns, spiked spine, and large bushy tail to the United States as a present to his mother. With it he enclosed a note of explanation:

"Boxer was an heirloom in the Laing family, and when his owner had to flee from the Long Haired Rebels, he took Boxer with him as one of the especially valuable possessions of the family ... When we were coming home in 1881 he wished to make me some present, but was hard up, so he sold Boxer to me for about \$5. I would not undertake to replace it for many times this amount. No doubt there are collectors who would pay \$100 or more for it. Take good care of him, for folk of tribe are very rare. I have never seen another bronze unicorn of his size."

In 1896 Pacific acquired Boxer as a gift from Dr.

symbol of school spirit.
Boxer dropped from sight for a number of months, reappearing as the prize possession of the class of 1906 at various campus functions. When the class of '06 graduated, Boxer disappeared from campus again and surfaced in 1911 when members of the class of '06 released the bronze idol following an alumni meeting. The dog disappeared once again as soon as students discovered it in Brighton Chapel, Marsh Hall.

In 1912, Boxer was first separated from his appendages — his tail and front leg were broken off during a class scrimmage. The classes pooled the parts and had a

for hiding. On a rumor that the Gammas held the idol, members of Alpha Zeta ransacked apartments in a futile search. Finally in April, 1937, Myrl Barkhurst '41 discovered the prize hidden in a glass case in the old Carnegie library and raced through the building to toss the dog through a window to a waiting confederate below. Although the flash was successful for the new owners of Boxer, it was also expensive, due to the smashed window in Carnegie. A month later Boxer was displayed inside the window of the Forest Grove National Bank, but no one was willing to discover through experience what the consequences of breaking

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the bank window would be, so the Gammas kept the dog.

The Gammas nearly lost the mascot soon after flashing him at the fraternity banquet in May, 1938. Four Gammas — Ivone Amend '37, Myrl Barkhurst '41, Lew Merz '39 and Tommy Fishburn — detoured on their way back to Boxer's hiding place and stopped to get a picture of Pacific President Dobbs holding the idol. As this was taking place, the Gammas were jumped by a group of Alpha Zetas. Fishburn tried to drive away with the dog, but AZ George Racette '41 climbed aboard and pulled some vital wires to immobilize the car. Fishburn raced across a pasture clutching

the bronze mascot and gave it to fraternity brother Barkhurst who frantically peddled away on a borrowed bicycle. The Gammas won that encounter.

But shortly afterward, the Gammas' long possession of Boxer came to an end. Howard Horner '40 and Forest Bump '42 drove by a Phi Beta-Philco picnic with Boxer in the car. Horner yelled, "Boxer!" The car stalled, foiling a quick getaway and the Phi Betas grabbed Boxer. The Phi Betas rubbed salt in the Gammas' wounds by flashing Boxer at a Gamma Banquet in May, 1939. But only two Gammas answered the call of "Boxer" and they

quickly returned to their seats when it became evident that they were not going to get help from fraternity brothers.

Luck was with three Pacific coeds in February, 1940, when a farmer notified them that his son had found Boxer lying in a field. Katherine Ninemire '42, Betty Mathison '42 and Donna Kesner '40 posted a letter to the Index advertising a toss-out of Boxer in front of the old gym on March 29. The resulting battle raged for two hours, moving from the gym area to the Forest Grove-Banks highway, then back to campus and finally over to Main Street. It was this toss-
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Struggle for Boxer gives Pacific spirit

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out which was immortalized with the first Index pictures of an actual flash in the April 5, 1940 edition.

Two years and no Boxer flas. The Index was busy stirring up sentiment and in March, 1942, offered a prize to the person who returned Boxer. The dog had been taken from the home of Zada McGee in Klickitat, Washington, where it had resided since the flash of April, 1940. Zada received a letter from Misters X, Y and Z, the new owners, that they were willing to trade Boxer for three Boxer pictures signed by student body president Frank Buylseke. With the aid of Clayton Judy '44 and Ellis Lucia '44 the pictures with signature were obtained and the trade was made at the Benson Hotel in Portland.

A month after the announcement that Boxer would be the theme of the 1943 Heart of Oak yearbook, Boxer was flashed at a chapel service. He was taken from behind the stage curtains, displayed momentarily, then thrown through an open window to a reception committee two stories below. His front legs were broken off but the new owners promised a better weld job.

Boxer was flashed around campus several times in the next few months, acquiring new owners frequently. Then in late 1945 there was another Boxer disappearance, which lasted until late 1948. Phil Porter '45 returned Boxer to campus from his haven at the University of Michigan Medical School.

The Index headlines screamed "EXTRA!" and the banner announced a Boxer release to take place Sunday, September 25, 1948, near the University sign in the Southeast corner of the campus. The first announced toss-out in eight years brought throngs of students to the designated spot. After a 40-minute fight the Alpha Zeta fraternity came up with the dog — minus one leg, which was kept by Buzz De Vita '49, but he later gave it to the frat to be welded to the body. Lee Prangle '48, who had gained possession of Boxer's tail some years earlier, refused to return the tail so long as the AZ's had the dog.

The remainder of 1948 was a period of calm for Boxer, comparatively speaking. He was flashed once at an assembly but escaped unhurt.

Then in February, 1949, he was flashed at McCormick

Hall. When the the mud cleared, four Phi Betes and four Gammas held possession of the dog. They designated Al Daniels '50 custodian. Soon after this flash the tail was returned.

Again Boxer retired from active campus life. It was not until January, 1955 that a picture of him resting on the previous week's Index showed up in the student newspaper. But the next Boxer flash did not take place until the following Fall at Homecoming. The new owners of Boxer after that flash were John Rudi '57, Ken White '58 and Gary Williams '57. They enlarged their group to include Don Dupey '59 and Jim Larson '57. The five kept their prize after flashing it at a Herrick dorm meeting. The next flash in February, 1956, started at Herrick. The fight traveled to Pacific Avenue and ended finally in the backyard of a Forest Grove resident.

Professor Jacob Bauer came into possession of the dog and threw it out much sooner than any one expected. Dr. Bauer set Boxer out in the middle of campus to start a battle lasting from mid-morning to nearly 4 p.m. Bill Tiedgen gained possession, dashed across campus into the getaway car of Ken Leek '58. The two took George Miller, Duke Anderson '58 and Ozzie Ray into their confidence.

Boxer disappeared until

the Awards Assembly of May 21, 1958. After a fierce fight in which tear gas was used, Ed Gayle '61 broke free and jumped into a car with Dave Favor '61, Emil Thorp and John Peterson '60. They hid the dog in the Tillamook Burn and returned to Forest Grove. The two Gamma members of the group (Thorp and Peterson) led let the other three out of the car and sped back to the Burn to re-hide the dog. After a bit of confusion in which Gamma Steve Tucker '62 got the dog away from his fraternity brothers Torp and Peterson, Boxer was reunited with his front leg (which was in Alpha Zeta hands), his other leg (which was in the hands of Bob Wendel '62, a Phi Bete), and his tail (which was in the hands of John Mendonza, a Gamma).

During the next two years Boxer traveled throughout the United States and even paid a visit to Europe. After much outcry from the students Boxer was returned to campus for a toss-out at an Awards Assembly in May, 1960. Boxer was released in front of Warner Hall. The mass of fighting students moved from campus, across Pacific Avenue, down Ash Street, then back to Pacific campus. Then Tod Johnson '62, with the aid of Dennis McCaron '63, pried the dog loose from the pile. Paul Thompson '63 then grabbed

Boxer and ran a block and a half with the idol clutched to his chest. Then he tossed it to Ron Eastwood '63, who threw it into the waiting car of Del LaRue '61 and Ted Swenson '61.

During the fall of 1961, Boxer was acquired by the Alpha Zetas, who proudly flashed their prize at Homecoming.

In 1964 Boxer was flashed via helicopter at Homecoming. The 1964 Heart of Oak also shows him resting in a tropical setting (Hawaii, perhaps?)

The 1967 Heart of Oak reports a Boxer flash by the Phi Betes in January and also the news that the Gammas triumphed in February.

1968 brought another helicopter appearance at Homecoming and the Gammas continued to hold the idol, taking it out of hiding on one particular occasions to have Boxer's picture taken resting in the hands of Presidential candidate Richard Nixon.

There was a continuing struggle for possession of the prized mascot in 1968 and 1969. Then Boxer dropped from sight and his location remains unknown to this day. This is not the longest absence on Boxer's part, historically speaking. However, a recent Index article expressed the wishes of many students and alumni to have Boxer returned to campus during this 126th anniversary celebration year. Boxer was often in the past referred to as "The Spirit of Pacific". As one longtime faculty member Jacob Bauer remarked recently, "Boxer gave the school a lot of zip!"

Bauer would like to see this part of Pacific's heritage and tradition preserved. He wants Boxer back on Pacific University Campus, where he belongs.

Dictionary to Boxer terminology

Boxer. n. — Pacific University mascot, also known as the Spirit of Pacific; orig., ancient Chinese idol cast in bronze

Flash. n. and vt. — An appearance by Boxer on campus, often resulting in a violent struggle for possession of Boxer by Pacific students

In hiding — Where Boxer is when no flash is taking place

Riot. n. — violent and sometimes bloody struggle among Pacific students seeking possession of Boxer; the consequences of a flash

Toss-out. n. — Boxer is thrown into a crowd of students, resulting in a riot

Index. n. — student newspaper, which announces Boxer flashes, reports the resulting riot, and agitates for a repeat performance

Heart of Oak. n. — student yearbook in which Boxer has been immortalized as the prized possession of one campus group or another

Gammas, Alpha Zetas, Phi Betes — Pacific fraternities, rival factions seeking possession of Boxer

