



PHOTOS BY MARTIN YOST

## The Boxer Rebellion—1968

*Four long years had passed, and a whole new generation of Pacific students were unexposed to Boxer, the richest of University traditions. Then, when the school nickname was changed to Boxers, a "toss-out" was imperative. Gamma Sigma fraternity, the owner, responded to the challenge. On April 18, Boxer made a riotous return.*

THE WORD HAD been out for weeks. The "Gammas" would toss out Boxer. So when the men of Gamma Sigma ran an item in the *Daily Bulletin* Monday morning, April 15, stating one should "park in the Marsh Hall parking lot at his own risk Wednesday, due to a possible windstorm," everybody knew what was coming.

The advance notice was beneficial. Every interested group on campus had a 'muscle squad' at the ready and, for the first real Boxer fight in nearly four years, everybody had an even chance. Students seized the unusual opportunity with bruising abandon and for four hours, the campus was embroiled in pitched battle.

The fighting, plus an ear-splitting chorus of shouts and screams,

flying shoes, swinging elbows and the laughter of bystanders, utterly shattered campus serenity.

To the uninitiated, the proceedings were baffling, to say the very least. The Boxer tradition started in 1900 when Richard Faulkner '02 spirited it away from chapel. In the intervening years Boxer somehow became a prestigious possession. Tradition demands that the bronze Ming Dynasty statue be tossed up for grabs periodically and this always triggers full-scale brawling which, though not hateful, is darned rough. Once this was explained, visitors viewed the melee with a more discerning, and certainly more amused, frame of reference.

The big toss-out was aptly timed, coming just weeks after the Alumni

Association and student body voted to change the University's nickname from Badgers to Boxers. Earlier, the students officially "buried" Benny Badger in a campus ceremony, to usher in the new "Era of the Boxer."

At 10 a.m. on B-Day, the courtyard between Marsh Hall and the University Center was rimmed with sweatshirted collegians. Classes weren't *officially* cancelled; it would have been a wasted proclamation. (One young professor was foolish enough to show up at a 9 a.m.

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*Monkey business, maybe, but a Boxer battle is hardly kidstuff, as the fellow pictured at left-center (above) can attest. An earful of elbow is the price he paid for a moment's possession of the bronze idol.*



Signs of combat: a rip ...



... a rare moment's pause ...



... and a fatigued sigh ...

**BOXER—1968** *continued*

class. When only three students arrived, he dismissed them and learned an indelible lesson about the importance of Boxer at Pacific).

Eleven o'clock came and still Boxer hadn't arrived. To do *something* to release energy during the excruciating wait, a group of men living at the Forest Grove Fire Hall went through calisthenics, in cadence. Rumors that they had formed a coalition with the men of Phi Tau Alpha heightened the emerging drama.

Nobody knew how Boxer would arrive. Some insisted a helicopter would drop him in 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, former 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 Department of English 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. Within seconds, the fight was on. Television and newspaper reporters feasted on the peculiar display of college springtime mania.

For the most part, combat centered on the lawn fronting Old College Hall with the principals hopelessly deadlocked. And headlocked. Occasionally, someone would snatch Boxer and spurt through the ocean of arms, legs and torsos and make a run for it — only to be mobbed a few yards away.

By five o'clock, though, the enormous huddle had moved to the parking lot behind Herrick Hall where the fighting intensified. Fresh troops and an automobile were brought in by the men of Phi Beta Tau — owners of Boxer until the Gammas quietly filched him last year. Then someone tossed the bronze idol to a Phi Bete stationed near the revved-up 1953 Chev and the rickety vehicle roared away, hurling from its fenders several desperate brawlers.

As the campus returned to a semblance of normalcy late that afternoon, the men of Phi Beta Tau rallied at the University Center snack bar to nurse their wounds and celebrate sweet victory.

It was not until that evening, when the student body settled down to watch the television reporters chronicle the melee, that it was discovered *Alpha Zeta* had pulled a coup.

To everyone's astonishment, not to mention the consternation of Phi Beta Tau, the announcers reported that an Alpha Zeta automobile chased the Phi Betes around farm roads west of Forest Grove and, finally, some 40 miles from campus, the pursuers captured Boxer when the old Chev threw a rod.

The carload of AZs piled out, surrounded the single Phi Bete driver and asked if they had to fight for Boxer. Discretion being the better part of valor, the Phi Bete handed Boxer through the window and the elated AZs roared off.

True to tradition, Boxer was quickly placed in hiding. There he will remain until the time is ripe to toss him out again or to flash him. (A "flash" is a mere public *showing*, as opposed to a "toss-out," in which Boxer is put up for grabs.)

One such moment came a few days later when Richard Nixon was campaigning in the Oregon Republican Primary election in Tualatin, a few miles away. Political Science Professor Eldon Hout, an AZ advisor and Washington County Commissioner, arranged to have some of the Greeks pose with Mr. Nixon and Boxer. The former Vice President laughed when he was told the last Presidential candidate to hold Boxer was William Jennings Bryan, in 1896, who was defeated by William McKinley. He laughed ... but returned the statue. **END**