

Hot on the Trail of Boxer



By Charlotte Filer

Boxer made it into the news again this year. Channel 8 television and both the Oregonian and Oregon Journal came to campus to feature our 400-year-old mascot that has been missing since 1969.

This renewed the interest of both students and alumni to find Boxer. Student curiosity was heightened when notices about Boxer started appearing in the daily bulletin, Boxer Briefs, under the signature CBS (Concerned Black Students).

The Index started investigating. In its Feb. 29, 1980, issue the Index quoted Lonnie Winbush, president of CBS, as saying, "We might have Boxer and we might not. We're waiting to see what kind of reward is being offered by the Alumni." The CBS adviser, Harry Le Grande, told the Index, "Nobody has it to my knowledge, but we haven't had a meeting in a long time."

In that same Index issue Dr. Byron Steiger, sociology professor since 1974, wrote a Faculty Perspective column headlined, "Is it time to drop Boxer?" He questioned keeping Boxer as the university mascot partly because "as a physical entity, Boxer may no longer exist" and because Boxer is associated with violence on campus and in its past connection to the Boxer Rebellion.

In the next issue of the Index (March 14, 1980), a letter to the editor was printed from Dr. Steve Prince, a semi-retired English faculty member now living in Arch Cape, Ore. He refuted Steiger's argument about dropping a mascot that may never return to campus, because "he never was 'at' Pacific even before he disap-

peared, except for those few hours when he was being fought over."

Prince pointed out that a Boxer toss or flash was no more violent than a football game yet it drew more participation and was more fun to watch. He concluded his letter:

But does Boxer really connote violence? Not in himself, he doesn't. That he came out of the Boxer Rebellion is not his fault. He had nothing to do with it. His roots go back centuries before that time . . . I think he is a kind of dragon-dog, very common in Chinese iconography. His duty was to stand guard at temples, to ward off evil spirits. What's wrong with that as a symbolic mascot for this temple of learning?

It was in 1967 that Pacific students and alumni decided to make Boxer, which had been the university's symbol of spirit since 1896, the official mascot and name for athletic teams. The mascot's name appears on campus in the above-mentioned Boxer Briefs, Boxer Books (the book store), and Boxer Pause (part of the University Center). Boxer's profile appears on everything from car stickers and parents' day name tags to athletic letters and donors' neck ties. Thus Boxer, although not physically present, is prominent in drawing, photo, and spirit.

What is the feeling on campus today about Boxer? Steiger is not alone in suggesting that Boxer should be replaced. Many students don't care, probably because the long-missing Boxer seems remote to them. Yet, there are many students who would like to have him back or at least to keep him as a symbol. Last year the Index attempted to spark a drive to return Boxer or a replica to campus. It was unsuccessful.

Even if Boxer returned, the traditions surrounding him would likely change.

Rather than lusting for toss outs, the students seem to think that Boxer should be returned and put on display securely on campus where he could be seen by all and not fought over. However, alumni have scoffed at that notion, suggesting that the alumni,

if not the students, would find a way to get him and spirit him away again.

The alumni want to know where Boxer is and to retain his personality as a part of their alma mater. Since the media publicity last winter and mention of Boxer in an alumni letter from Virginia Caine Cooper '59, Alumni Association president, the Alumni Office has received many, many comments in correspondence and conversations from alumni saying that Boxer should be returned to campus and to the tradition he represents.

Boxer is so often associated with the men on campus, but he has meaning to women, also. When Kay Powell Harris '71 of California visited the campus this year for the first time since leaving 12 years ago, she spoke mainly of Boxer.

She had seen him twice. "If you see him, you know how special he is." Then she added, "There's tradition even if students haven't seen him. The story and the myth stay alive."

She recounted how everyone can remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated and then said, "If you see Boxer,



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you remember all about that event, too."

She then tossed out a new idea and possible challenge to alumni: Find a Pacific alumnus who is a detective and send him out after Boxer. Any volunteers?

History shows that Boxer has the powers to perform many feats. Let's look at what Boxer can do:

Boxer arouses emotion — In the early 1950s or late 1940s Boxer was a guest at a Philo sorority May Day breakfast. One Philo recalled, "Miss Margaret Hinman, class of 1891, just screamed when she saw Boxer come in, and tears streamed down her face and her hands just shook! Boxer was put on the table in front of her, and the tears just streamed, and soon everyone else was getting tearful. All of us were allowed to go over and touch the dog." from *Pacific Today* (Winter, 1976).

Boxer bridges the generation gap — "Nobody knew how Boxer would arrive . . . 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." — from *Pacific Today*, (Summer, 1968).

Boxer binds the campus together — "A Boxer flash was more stimulating than winning the conference football championship. Boxer involved the entire campus." — *Fred Lemcke '42* in a January, 1980, telephone conversation.

Boxer makes friends in the community — Boxer was hidden in many homes in the Forest Grove area at many different times. The community enjoyed Boxer and participated with the students in the mystery and mystique which Boxer creates. Many times students would select a childless home or a home without Pacific alumni. Others would not think of looking for Boxer there, they reasoned. These families cooperated. Boxer has seen the basements, attics, cupboards, flour bins, and secret places of a surprising number of homes in Forest Grove.

Boxer turns up in interesting places — Boxer was found in the woodpile of old Marsh Hall many times for example, and in an unused oven in the basement of Knight Hall when it was a fraternity house. He has been checked into the old Multnomah Hotel in Portland. He went to Europe with an alumnus doughboy during World War I. The Lewis and Clark College football team is said to have had him at

one time. But, most importantly he can be found in the memories of alumni and in the campus spirit of today, thus binding alumni and undergraduates.

Mary Ruddick, alumni director, knows two alumni who are each holding one of Boxer's appendages, and they have promised to return these appendages when the body of Boxer returns, also. The Alumni Office and Alumni Association will see that the welding job is done to make Boxer whole again.

Ruddick and the Alumni Council are eager for any information on Boxer's whereabouts. He was last seen at an Oct. 16, 1969, toss out. He is believed to have left the campus in the hands of *Dennis "Moses" Williams '72*. Though Williams was a member of the Black Student Union (now Concerned Black Students), it is not positively known whether Williams held Boxer on behalf of the Union or as an individual. The Alumni Office has no current address for Williams and has been unable to locate him.

Another incident related to Boxer this winter was the mysterious return to campus after an absence of some 12 years of a large oil painting of Boxer by *Wanda Williams Haskell '70* of Seattle. Her family came to claim the painting, so another alumnus has volunteered to paint a new portrait of Boxer for the campus.

Meanwhile, former Alumni President *Ginny Cooper* expressed it well when she wrote in her letter to alumni last year: "If you have 'Boxer,' for goodness sakes, get it to the Alumni Office!" ■

Through the 1960s, a Boxer toss-out excited the entire campus and brought everyone running.

