

Sports Traditions

By SIGFRID FLOREN

MANY of the University traditions are connected in some way or another with intercollegiate sports, and particularly with football.

Football was first played at the University of Oklahoma forty-five years ago—in the fall of 1895 when the University had five sophomore students and about ten freshmen, the rest of the student body consisting of four pharmacy students and music and preparatory school students. However, only one game was played that fall.

The next year a football team was organized and two games were played with Norman High School.

With the rapid increase in student interest in football, the adoption of University colors, yells, songs and pep meetings was inevitable. Consequently Dr. David R. Boyd, first president of the University, appointed committees.

Members of the committee on colors were: May Overstreet, an instructor, and three students, Mrs. Ruth House Daniels, '02, now deceased; L. W. Cole, '99, recently retired professor of psychology at the University of Colorado, and Ray Hume, '01pharm, doctor and surgeon, now deceased.

The committee chose cream and crimson as the official University colors. Various deviations of these exact shades have appeared through the years in the form of pennants, banners, streamers, and so on, but through forty-five years the official colors have remained the same.

The first yell suggested was a derivation from a Sigma Nu fraternity yell. After several revisions the yell was standardized as follows:

Hi rickety whoop-to-do
Boomer, Sooner, Okla. U.

With the exception of change in "Okla. U." to "O. K. U." the same yell is still used by student crowds at football and basketball games. Many others have been originated through the years but none has seriously challenged this one as *the* Sooner yell. Since it has lasted nearly half a century it seems to be one tradition that deserves the name.

The story of Sooner pep songs is quite different. As was related in a recent article in *Sooner Magazine*, dozens of O. U. songs have had bursts of popularity

but most of them have quickly sunk into obscurity.

The *Boomer Sooner* song of recent years probably has more tradition about it than any other. Its history, however, is rather obscure and its future is somewhat endangered by the frequent objections to the tune, which is the same as that of Yale University's *Boola Boola* song.

Boomer Sooner is doing very well at present. It is sung or played regularly at football and basketball games. Every O. U. touchdown is a cue for the band to strike up *Boomer Sooner* with a contagious enthusiasm. Student and alumni loyalty to the song is indicated by the general observance of the custom of rising to their feet whenever it is played.

Pep celebrations in connection with football games came into vogue at an unknown but early date. Huge bonfires have long been the nucleus for such celebrations, beginning before the turn of the century. Along with them developed the "chain" or shirt-tail parades in which students marched through the student residential area and down town in Norman.

THERE was a period of years when pre-game pep meetings resulted in student parades which closely resembled riots. The mob of students would storm the doors of the theatres or perhaps jam their way into a campus shop. Prudent managers would post a lookout and lock their doors when a "parade" came in sight. Frequently property damage caused by raiding students amounted to a considerable sum. University officials, finding that an official ban on such activities had little effect, resorted to strategy and managed to have the pep rallies handled in such a way as to discourage violent demonstrations. In recent years the Friday night pep rallies have been colorful but not riotous.

A hot issue ten years ago—but virtually dormant today—is the traditional contest for possession of the clapper from the old A. and M. College bell. The large iron bell hung in the tower of Old Central Building on the A. and M. campus, and was ceremonially rung after every intercollegiate victory. Several courageous Sooners, deciding that the victory bell should not be heard following the 7-0 Aggie triumph over O. U. in 1930, robbed the bell of its clapper.

A party of Aggies drove to Norman, lured the clapper's guardian away on a "ghost" date, but could not find the clap-

per. Between halves at the Aggie-Sooner basketball game later in the year the O. U. '89ers Club paraded it before the crowd. Afterwards the Aggies proposed that the clapper be put up as a permanent trophy to the winner of the annual A. and M.-O. U. football game. It was so agreed.

Enthusiasm over the bell clapper has died down in recent years, partly due to the fact that the Aggies have not beaten O. U. since 1933. Sooners regained the clapper in 1935 and held it. Whitley Cox, '36ex, a University sprinter from '32 to '35, now a Tulsa salesman, became the recognized custodian of the clapper for O. U. At last reports he still had it.

Homecoming of alumni on the occasion of one of the major football games in early November is a tradition of many years' standing. C. Ross Hume, one of the first two Bachelor of Arts graduates of the University, believes that he is the first Sooner "homecomer." Mr. Hume, now an attorney in Anadarko, graduated from the University in 1898. That summer he was elected teacher in the Newkirk public schools. He was the only man on the faculty there and that fall he introduced and coached football there. He returned to Norman for the Thanksgiving day game with Texas Christian University in the fall of 1898.

On October 30, 1915, he attended the first formal Homecoming for University alumni. Faculty members had been talking about such an event as early as 1912 and the Missouri game in 1914 was classified as the Homecoming game by the student newspaper of that time. Since the first official Homecoming celebration held on the occasion of the Kansas game in 1915, the occasion has become more outstanding each year. Student houses are elaborately decorated in honor of the visitors and a lively parade is presented for the crowd. A reception for the returning alumni is held in the Union Building following the game.

A colorful addition to the Homecoming tradition was made about 1927 when the Indian Club began its all-night tomtom ceremony. At sundown the pledges of the Indian Club begin beating the tomtom at a chosen spot on the University campus and continue until sunrise of Homecoming day, a ceremony that is the final rite in initiation of the club's pledges. Tradition holds that any break in the steady beat of the tomtom throughout the night is likely to endanger success of the Sooner football team next day.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a series of articles about traditions at the University of Oklahoma.