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Eighty-Six Homecomings

The first one made a jackass out of the sophomore class

By Pat McDonnell

Tickets to the University's first homecoming football game, November 6, 1920, against the Utah State Aggies, cost \$1. This year, reserved seats for the Wolf Pack's homecoming game, 4 p.m. Oct. 21 against San Jose State, will run you \$22.

The cost of admission isn't the only aspect of homecoming that has changed since the event debuted on campus 86 years ago.

The main non-football event of that first homecoming weekend was a "monster dance in the Gymnasium," as the *Sagebrush* described it. The dance was sponsored by a group of Lincoln Hall residents. All "old-timers" were to be welcomed "most heartily." There couldn't have been many really old alumni, considering that the University had graduated its first students only 29 years before.

The 1920 homecoming game itself was no contest. The Wolf Pack won 21-0. The real entertainment came at halftime, when leaders of the freshman class led Sleeping Sickness, a jackass, out onto Mackay Field. The animal wore the number 23, a jibe at the sophomore class, scheduled to graduate in 1923. A near-riot ensued, and only the referee's whistle kept things from getting out of control, according to the student newspaper's account.

The concept of a homecoming game is believed to have originated at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which held its first in 1910. Other schools — Harvard, Yale and Michigan — had previously held football games involving alumni players, some dating to the 1870s. But Illinois asserts that it was the first to have a well-planned, school-sponsored, annual alumni event centering on an intercollegiate game.

At Nevada, homecoming's popularity peaked during the '20s and '30s with a revival in the '50s and early '60s. Accord-

Photo courtesy of University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections



**The 1926 homecoming game on Mackay Field.
Inset: Students snake-dancing downtown in 1961.**

ing to the 1928 *Artemisia* yearbook, classes were dismissed on Friday that year, and the alumni banquet was held in the Golden Hotel downtown at Second and Center streets.

Over the years homecoming weekend grew to include events like the Wolves Frolic (a night of skits with a vaudeville flavor), large bonfires and pep rallies, dances with a homecoming queen, and parades through downtown. For many years a cross-country race from Sparks to Reno was part of homecoming weekend. The parades eventually morphed into students in pajamas dancing in long snake lines through the streets and under the Reno Arch.

Interest in homecoming waned in the 1940s, when the campus was depleted of many of its male students because of World War II. Returning G.I.s deemed many of the old campus traditions to be "kid stuff."

The '60s saw new traditions added, including an international dinner. In 1961 the homecoming parade was still going strong. A float that year featured a Wolf Pack mascot character atop a large globe. The float was labeled, "Around Pomona in Eighty Plays," a reference to Cal Poly-



Pomona, the Wolf Pack's victim that year by a score of 28-20.

The frivolity of homecoming, however, was about to be pushed aside by different student concerns, especially the Vietnam War. Many students agitated for elimination of the two years of ROTC training that was compulsory for nearly all male students. They eventually succeeded.

In later years the student body's demographics changed with more people enrolling later in life than the traditional 18-to-22 range and with a higher percentage of students living and working off campus. The homecoming parade would be repeatedly downsized. (See the ad on page 2 for details on this year's parade.)

True to its origins, however, the homecoming game is still one of the best-attended of the season. And as the listings on page 33 indicate, there are still plenty of activities for alumni to enjoy when they come home to their alma mater for a weekend in the fall.

Pat McDonnell is a writer and editor in the Office of Marketing and Communications.

How GOOD will this year's Wolf Pack football team be?

PIGSKIN PAT PREDICTS

By Pat McDonnell

Many Wolf Pack football fans have enjoyed an off-season of blissful reverie. The overtime win over Central Florida in the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl, the 8-3 regular season, the first-ever Western Athletic Conference title — they made for a sweet season, especially after five years of struggling against the likes of Fresno State, Louisiana Tech and WAC superpower Boise State.

But that was last year. For all of the success in 2005, and the fact that the Pack was the only WAC team to win in the post-season, the sports media predict Nevada to finish third this year behind Boise State and Fresno State.

I have to concur.

Here's why:

1. *The rough early schedule*

Each of the first four opponents — at Fresno State, at Arizona State and home against Colorado State and Northwestern — played in a bowl last season. The upside is, if the team can go .500 during this stretch, the going gets much easier. The opponents in October and November — San Jose State, New Mexico State, Idaho

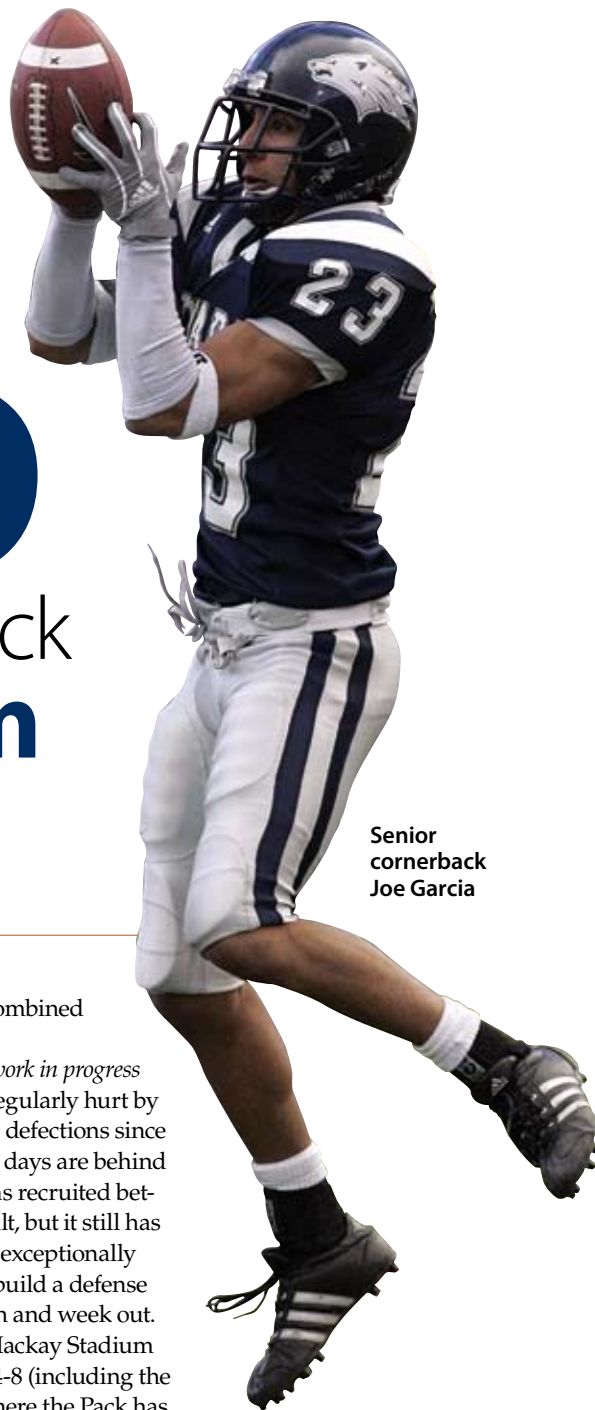
and Utah State — were a combined 8-37 last year.

2. *A defense that's still a work in progress*

The defense has been regularly hurt by injuries, inexperience and defections since at least 2001. Maybe those days are behind the team. The program has recruited better under Coach Chris Ault, but it still has difficulty getting the fast, exceptionally strong players needed to build a defense that can dominate week in and week out. The Wolf Pack is 10-2 at Mackay Stadium the past two seasons but 4-8 (including the bowl win) on the road, where the Pack has struggled to contain top offenses.

Three all-conference junior college transfers on the defensive line -- Mundrae Clifton, Sam Stewart and Jay Dixon — will be keys. Fans can only hope they're as productive as cornerback Joe Garcia, a juco transfer who led the still pass-happy WAC in interceptions in 2005.

Reno-area fans are especially interested in seeing how sophomore linebacker Joshua Mauga from Fallon develops. He earned honorable mention freshman All-America honors last year from *The Sporting News*. So did placekicker Brett Jaekle.



Senior cornerback Joe Garcia

2006 schedule

Sept. 1 at Fresno St.	5 p.m.
Sept. 9 at Arizona St.	7 p.m.
Sept. 16 vs Colorado St.	6 p.m.
Sept. 22 vs Northwestern	5 p.m.
Sept. 30 at UNLV	7 p.m.
Oct. 7 at Hawai'i	9:05 p.m.
Oct. 21 vs San Jose St.*	4 p.m.
Oct. 28 vs New Mexico St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 4 at Idaho	2 p.m.
Nov. 11 vs Utah St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 18 at Louisiana Tech	noon
Nov. 25 vs Boise State	TBA

*Homecoming. All times Pacific

Photo courtesy of John Byrne, University of Nevada, Reno Media Services

3. Boise is still the bully of the WAC

Four-time defending conference champion Boise State, with highly regarded quarterback Jared Zabransky and WAC preseason Defensive Player of the Year Korey Hall, gets to play Fresno State and Hawai'i on its blue home turf. But the Broncos have a new coach in Chris Petersen, lost some depth on their offensive line, and they have to play Nevada in Reno. The defense had better be ready. Nevada hasn't allowed fewer than 30 points to a Boise State offense in eight years.

As Fresno State Head Coach Pat Hill has said, "The championship belongs to Boise State until someone takes it away."

Hill's team lost the WAC crown despite defeating Boise State handily. The Bulldogs' athleticism is an edge in just about every WAC game, though they break in a new quarterback this year.

4. An offense with new legs

In the new pistol offensive formation (in which the quarterback lines up just short of the shotgun position, about 3 to 4 yards from the center), All-WAC second-team quarterback Jeff Rowe passed for 2,925 yards and 21 touchdowns with just 10 interceptions in his junior season. He has a chance to set most of Nevada's

passing records this season. All-conference wide receiver Caleb Spencer and tight end Anthony Pudewell look to take advantage of the extra time Rowe has in the pistol, as well as the quarterback's elusiveness.

But will he get that extra time? The line returns starters Barrett Reznick at guard, center Jimmy Wadhams and tackles Dominic Green and Charles Manu. But losing tackle Tony Moll, who played all 942 offensive snaps, to the Green Bay Packers is tough. This group, along with senior running back Robert Hubbard, will need to keep improving if the Pack is to replace the 1,400 yards and 13 touchdowns of senior running back B.J. Mitchell, the 2005 WAC Offensive Player of the Year.

Bottom line: 7-5.

Look for a big conference win on the road against Hawai'i and a 4-2 home record (losing to Northwestern and Boise State — the latter keeping the Broncos atop the WAC). The Pack should hold onto the Fremont Cannon with another win versus UNLV. The Hawai'i victory could ensure another bowl appearance.

Pat McDonnell is a longtime Wolf Pack fan and a writer and editor in the Office of Marketing and Communications.



Athletic Director Cary Groth

PACK SECOND OVERALL IN 2006

In 2005-06 the Wolf Pack tallied its most successful season in six years of competing for the Western Athletic Conference's all-sports Commissioner's Cup.

Nevada finished second in the nine-team conference, less than three points behind Boise State.

The Pack took WAC titles in football and men's basketball and won the conference softball tournament. The swimming and diving program was second in the conference.

Nevada's previous best finish in Commissioner's Cup competition was fourth in 2002-03.



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Nevada's first fraternity

The mysterious T.H.P.O. was born in a barn

By Michael Fischer, D.D.S., '71 (pre dentistry)

The year is 1891 and the University of Nevada, then known as Nevada State University, is about to graduate its first class, three students.

This is fitting, given that the entire campus consists of three major buildings: Morrill Hall, Stewart Hall and the Agricultural Experiment Station, later known as the Hatch Building. A hole in the ground represents what will become the fourth, the mining building. There's also an old wooden barn behind Morrill where "day" students — those commuting from homes in the Reno area — tie up their horses.

Less than 10 years after relocating to Reno from Elko, Nevada State has many needs and not only the need to enroll more students (there were 189 in 1890-91). Among the more pressing physical deficiencies is a shop for general campus repairs and a building where the mechanical arts can be taught.

Lacking the budget to build one, the regents direct the college's newly hired instructor of mechanical arts,

Richard Brown, to build it himself. That is, Brown is told to hire some students to help him move the old barn behind Morrill to an area northeast of the soon-to-be mining building and then outfit the first floor for a woodworking and machine shop. The second floor will become a *de facto* dormitory for the barn movers and other students, mainly country boys from Nevada and eastern California for whom a commute to classes by horse would take too long.

The space also will become the home of the University's first fraternity.

From its founding soon after the completion of the mechanical arts building until being absorbed into the national fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon in 1917, T.H.P.O., the name of the secretive organization founded by the out-of-town-ers, dominated the leadership of the student body not unlike the famous and mysterious Skull and Bones Society at Yale. And like Skull and Bones, whose members include George W. Bush and

John Kerry, the brotherhood begun by the boys in the barn spawned many prominent public figures.

No one knows for certain how the initials T.H.P.O. were chosen and what they stood for. One story is that all the members' names were placed in a hat and four were drawn. They then used the initial letters to create the name with periods included. Another is that T.H.P.O. stood for Truth, Honor, Purity and Obedience. A Sigma Alpha Epsilon and T.H.P.O. historian, Denver Dickerson (grandson of a Nevada governor of the same name), speculates that this was mere puffery inserted into the group's application to become part of SAE in hopes of impressing the evaluators.

The most popular, and interesting, theory is that the group was founded in the best traditions of mob warfare — for mutual protection.

Residents of Lincoln Hall, circa 1900. The secret T.H.P.O. fraternity reformed in the dormitory after the group's original home, a converted barn, burned down in 1895. Standing at left with hands on the railing is Richard Brown, professor of practical mechanics and the group's informal adviser.



The story goes that the students who had come from afar to study at “the college on the hill” found themselves the target of hazing by the downtowners.

“In order to hold their own,” a student from the early 1900s, Silas Ross ’09 recalled many years later, “they got together and formed a little association, and they called it ‘the hill protective organization’” or T.H.P.O. for short.

The animosity between townies and the out-of-townners is evident in an article that appeared in the November 15, 1897, issue of a campus publication, *The Student Record*. The reporter tells of an incident in which Reno public school students began hissing when University students gave the college yell at a local theater. The confrontation was considered dramatic enough that the story was picked up by *The News* of Carson City and the *Nevada State Herald* of Wells.

A year earlier, an article in *The Student Record* — whose editor was a T.H.P.O. member — noted how T.H.P.O.s “held together and aided one another as one man, for in unity is strength.” And the 1900 *Artemisia* yearbook describes T.H.P.O. as a group of men who “band together for purposes of mutual friendship and aid.”

The truth about the group’s origins may never be known because the old mechanical-arts building was destroyed by a fire along with all the fraternity’s early records on November 2, 1895. The residents of the building were moved to temporary quarters and a year later to the newly opened Lincoln Hall.

T.H.P.O. was reorganized within Lincoln. Meetings normally convened in room 6, often at the stroke of midnight, and with secrecy strictly maintained. Initiation ceremonies took place around the campus reservoir (now Manzanita Lake) and the Catholic cemetery (site of Nye and Argenta Halls).

An intriguing, if honorary, member of T.H.P.O. was Clarence Hungerford Mackay, University benefactor and son of the famous Comstock silver baron John Mackay. The story has it that while on campus for the dedication of the original Mackay football field in 1909, he was surreptitiously taken from a reception at the president’s home to a room in



T.H.P.O. members’ photos made into stamps for a scrapbook, circa 1898

Lincoln Hall. There he was disguised as a senior in a flannel shirt and corduroy pants and spent the night on the town with T.H.P.O. members. The group’s 1909 petition for membership in the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity proudly lists Mackay atop a roster of T.H.P.O. alumni.

Around 1900, T.H.P.O. evolved from a protective organization into more of a social organization. The group especially coveted leadership positions in the military and athletic programs, academic support societies and the student government. T.H.P.O.s often ascended to such positions as cadet major of the military, president of the student body, class president, and editor or business manager of the student paper. Athletics posts were also prized, especially team captain in track, football and baseball.

Two T.H.P.O. members in the 1910s became Rhodes Scholars: Floyd S. Bryant ’13 and Walter C. Jepson, who started at Nevada in 1912. A third passed the examinations and was eligible for appointment but died prior to being able to attend the prestigious program at England’s University of Oxford.

T.H.P.O. social events were highlights of the academic year on campus. The most important was a social and dance held in the gymnasium on the eve of Washington’s Birthday. The rafters of the gym would be decorated in black and white, the colors of the fraternity.

Another was a hay ride and dance at Huffaker’s Hall, in the south Truckee Meadows. Wagons loaded with hay and drawn by horses would pull up to Manzanita Hall. T.H.P.O. members, dates and chaperones would travel through the night singing along the way. Dancing to live music was the main entertainment with a meal served at midnight. Return was by the same conveyance by the light of the moon.

NOTABLE ALUMNI OF T.H.P.O.

- ▶ **George W. Malone ’17** became a U.S. senator.
- ▶ **George W. Springmeyer ’02** became U.S. attorney for Nevada.
- ▶ **Nathaniel Estes Wilson**, one of the group’s informal faculty advisers and a professor of chemistry, became mayor of Reno.
- ▶ **Royce A. Hardy ’10**, prominent mining engineer for Reno banker and mine manager George Wingfield. Hardy owned the Joseph Giraud House/Hardy House on Flint Street in Reno, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- ▶ **Joseph F. McDonald ’15** became a prominent Reno newspaperman.
- ▶ **Albert Wallace Cahlan ’96** became an inspector with the Nevada State Police and the state’s first identification expert.

Life for the T.H.P.O. men continued much the same until they were accepted into the realm of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. No less than the immortal Billy Levere, an influential early leader and two-time national president of the fraternity, conducted the ceremony on March 9, 1917.

All in all it was a remarkable journey for a bunch of country kids who just wanted to protect themselves and uphold the honor of the University.

Dr. Michael Fischer, a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, is a dentist in Gardnerville. He acknowledges that nothing in history writing is as dangerous as calling something “the first,” so he is bracing for letters challenging his assertion that T.H.P.O. was the first fraternity organized on campus. He would like to hear from anyone with further T.H.P.O. history or memorabilia and can be reached at (775) 265-3699.

Photos courtesy of University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections



The chaotic annual cane rush pitted freshmen against sophomores in the University's early years. Above, the rush of 1916 on Mackay Field; on page 25, the rush of 1902.

Rumbles on the Campus

Early campus traditions included a brutal battle over the wearing of a beanie

By Ed Cohen

The players stood on opposite goal lines of the field, more than a dozen freshmen men at one end, an equal number from the sophomore class at the other. One of the sophomores clutched what appeared to be a sawed-off shovel handle. Spectators lined the sides of the field, eager for the contest to begin. And at the sound of a pistol firing, it did.

The two lines of young men, none of whom was wearing any protective gear, rushed forward and came together in violent collisions.

In 20 minutes, probably sooner, the match would be over and many ribs and noses broken, but a vital campus issue would be decided. And that was, who

would have to wear little blue beanies on their heads for the rest of the school year.

By the early decades of the 20th century, the University of Nevada had football and football rivalries with other schools, but probably nothing surpassed the intensity of the rivalry between the freshman and sophomore classes. A number of unusual and, in many cases, brutal competitions were devised to prove which class was best — including the one described above, the annual cane rush.

The interclass rivalries grew out a strict caste system that pervaded the Reno campus in its early days, no doubt adopted from the snobbish traditions at schools back East. Archived issues of

the *Sagebrush* student newspaper and remembrances of early alumni collected by the University's Oral History Program offer insights into those traditions, sporting and otherwise.

A committee of upperclassmen established the rules for conduct and dress on campus and saw to it that the traditions were upheld. For many years only seniors were allowed to sit on campus benches, and no student was allowed to cut across a lawn or quadrangle. Freshmen males were forbidden to talk to female students. Most humiliating of all, male freshmen had to wear a small blue beanie on the back of their heads with a white button on top. The skull cap was called a "dink."

As with other rules infractions, the

penalty for being caught without one's dink was to be thrown, fully clothed, into Manzanita Lake. Repeat offenders were subject to paddling or "tubbing," which consisted of being tossed in a tub of cold water and having one's head held under while stout upperclassmen pounded on the offender's stomach.

Like gladiators in the Roman Coliseum, freshmen had the opportunity to win their freedom from the dink. If the freshman team triumphed in the cane rush, the dinks could be discarded.

Neither of the standard histories of the University specifies how and when the cane rush came into existence. James W. Hulse's *The University of Nevada, A Centennial History* states that the event flourished from the 1890s until the early 1920s.

In his Oral History remembrance, Silas Ross, a student from 1905 to 1909, says upperclassmen devised the competition to build unity within the entering classes from the outset of their academic careers. Ross later became an undertaker and, later still, chair of the state Board of Regents (Ross Hall is named after him).

Cane rushes always took place within the first couple of weeks of fall term. The "cane" may have been exactly that in the beginning, but in subsequent years a stick or shortened shovel handle served the purpose. It was the job of the sophomores to carry the stick down the field and across the opponent's goal line.

The rules appear to have changed over the years, but as of 1910 it was illegal to throw the cane or even hand it forward. Players could not hide the cane in their clothes, although holding it behind one's back was a common tactic to confuse the defense. The 1910 rules set the official length of the cane at 27 inches.

The freshmen had the easier job. All they had to do was prevent the cane from being carried over their goal line within the allotted time, which in 1910 was 20 minutes. The freshmen typically tried to tackle the cane carrier and then pile onto the unlucky sophomore. Immobilization was an effective way to run time off the clock. The freshmen

could also win the match immediately by wrestling the cane away and holding it above their heads for a few seconds while no sophomore had a hand on it.

If the freshmen won the cane rush they were freed from wearing the dink, but a sophomore victory merely preserved the second-year students' wardrobe choices.

"They could wear coats and vests and



'When we met at midfield there was a clash. The fellow that had the cane was thrown to the ground and everybody piled on top of him.'

nice hats on the campus," recalled John Cahlan, a student from 1920-1926 who later became a newspaperman in Las Vegas, "and if they lost the [the rush], they lost that privilege."

Cane rushes appear to have been more rumble than rugby, but there were rules, at least in the later years. The ones agreed upon for 1910, for instance, stipulated that any contestant discovered "choking, kicking, biting or slugging" would be thrown out of the game.

Andrew D. Crofut competed in the cane rush in 1911 as a new student fresh off his family's ranch in Eureka County. He described the start of the contest this way:

"When we met at midfield there was a clash. The fellow that had the cane was thrown to the ground and everybody piled on top of him. Others tried

to drag us off, and it was quite a melee — a writhing mass of humanity six or eight deep. When I emerged from it, all I had on was my overalls and shoes. My shirt was torn off my back."

According to the *Sagebrush* account of the 1910 rush, the sophomores began by arranging themselves in the dreaded "flying wedge." This was an arrowhead-shaped formation designed to smash through a defensive line. The maneuver became popular in the early years of football but resulted in so many serious injuries and even deaths that it had to be outlawed.

In 1910 the freshmen managed to tackle the carrier before the cane had been advanced 20 yards, according to the *Sagebrush*. The first-year students then began piling on and "stuck there like leeches." But the sophomores weren't finished. A youth named Booby Hilton emerged from the pile with the cane and handed it to a classmate who raced downfield for the victory. It was only the second time in school history that the sophomore class had won.

The match was also exceptional in that nobody had gotten hurt. As with crashes in auto racing, it appears that the likelihood of witnessing serious injuries only added to the appeal of a cane rush. In fact in 1912, when the sophomores won the rush on the football equivalent of a return of the opening kickoff for a touchdown, the *Sagebrush* reporter lamented, "It was over so quickly that no one had time to get hurt. From the standpoint of a rush, it was a failure."

The casualty count was more gratifying for fans in the 1912 "dummy rush." In a dummy rush, the freshmen or sophomores would hang an effigy of the opposite class somewhere on campus, usually from a tree. This was a dare for the other class to try to take it down. (There were also "poster rushes" in which the sophomore class taunted the freshmen by putting up signs all over campus degrading the younger students.)

In a dummy rush, when the offended group tried to cut down the effigy, and if the dummy was being guarded, a

Homecoming2006

fight would ensue. In the rush of 1912, one student suffered a dislocated shoulder, another a sprained ankle and one was diagnosed with two broken ribs, the campus newspaper reported.

Opponents taken prisoner during a dummy rush were subject to tubbing or being thrown into a ditch or, more appropriately, tied up. For some time, the winner of the dummy rush was determined by which team had tied up the greater number of its opponents.

In some years the dummy rush was contested on a towering flagpole erected in front of Stewart Hall. Now gone, Stewart was located on the south side of what is now called the Jones Center, which borders the Quad. 1915 freshman Earl Wooster remembered the Stewart pole as being 60 feet tall and said that in an earlier life it had been the main mast of a sailing ship.

"It was the most amazing thing that



The victorious sophomore team after the 1910 cane rush.

nobody got killed," said Wooster, who later served as Washoe County's first school superintendent; Wooster High School is named for him. "They got up on that pole battling and kicking each other in the face and everything else."

The rushes were curtailed in the decades that followed by administrators concerned that someone might actually be killed. They also lost popularity as different types of students began to

enroll, recalled Procter "Bunny" Hug, a star athlete at the University in the 1920s who later became a coach and a school superintendent; Reno's Hug High School is named for him.

Hug said students returning from World War I, because they were older and had been away from school for a few years, regarded the traditions and rules as juvenile and refused to go along with them. It's also possible that some of the men had started families and no longer had time for roughhousing.

With administration opposition and without enough participants to sustain them, the traditions gradually faded into oblivion.

Ed Cohen is the University's director of communications and publications and editor of this magazine.

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Since joining our law firm, Neoma's titles have included Executive Assistant, Office Administrator, Director of Human Resources, and Marketing Manager. In the community she has been selected Woman of The Year for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, a Woman of Achievement by the Nevada Women's Fund and most recently Truckee Meadows Community College's 2006 Alumna of the Year.

Neoma, always moving forward, giving back and making a difference. And for that, we are proud to have her on our team. Congratulations, Neoma.



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