



"BOXER"
Pacific's Chinese Mascot

Pacific University has a very unusual mascot--a 16th century Chinese qilin (pronounced "chee-lin") made of bronze. This 25-lb incense burner--made in the form of a mythical beast with scales, hooves and horns--was used in China to frighten away evil spirits. The story of "Boxer" and how it became the "Spirit of Pacific" dates back over a century.

Rev. Joseph Elkanah Walker, a missionary serving in China, purchased the statue from a local merchant. Rev. Walker, an 1867 graduate of Pacific University, sent the bronze figure to his family in the 1890s with instructions that they donate it to his alma mater. When the Chinese idol first arrived on campus students dubbed it "College Spirit." It was placed in Marsh Hall's Brighton Chapel, remaining there undisturbed for several years.

In 1899, as a prank, a student "stole" the statue for the Class of 1902. This action launched the long-held tradition of student groups stealing, hiding, flashing and tossing the metal figure, competing over possession. Over the years various fraternities, sororities, athletic teams and other organizations fought for the prestige of acquiring the statue. The name "Boxer" first appeared in 1908 when the Weekly Index carried an article about another disappearance. This name is associated with the "Boxer Rebellion," a bloody uprising in northern China during the 1890s. The rebels, called "Boxers" in the media, were members of a secret society known as the I-ho-ch'uan (Righteous and Harmonious Fists).

The original Boxer from China was last seen in 1969 during a "toss" on the campus. In 1982, after many years and numerous rumors about Boxer's demise, a bronze replica was cast in an effort to continue the long tradition. The dangers associated with a Boxer toss are well documented. Accidents and injuries in recent years have prompted the university community to review the tradition and offer suggestions as to how the essence of the practice can be maintained without the violence. That discussion will continue until a safe alternative is chosen.