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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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FILE COPY

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BURL IVES TO LEAD EIU HOMECOMING PARADE

CHARLESTON, IL.--A very familiar face with an international-ly-known voice--Burl Ives--will be the parade marshal for the 1987 Eastern Illinois University Homecoming parade Saturday, Oct. 17.

He will also attend the EIU-Indiana State football game set for 1:30 p.m. and will lead the audience in singing the national anthem and the EIU Alma Mater.

-more-

Ives, now 78, is one of EIU's best-known alumni, attending Eastern from 1927 to 1930. A native of the tiny town of Hunt in nearby Jasper County, he holds an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from EIU (1985). Also, at this year's Homecoming, he will be one of six to receive a Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Three full days of activities, set for Friday, Saturday and Sunday Oct. 16-17-18, will also include luncheon reunions for eight graduation classes, a play, an art exhibit, a free square dance, a parade, an Early Bird Reception, and departmental reunions.

Often referred to as an "American Treasure," Ives was called "the mightiest troubador of this or any other century" by writer and historian Carl Sandburg.

Ives, who played football while at Eastern, is a singer and actor, having gained prominence in such areas as stage, radio, movies, and television. The author of nine books, he earned an Academy Award in 1958 for best supporting actor for his role in "The Big Country."

Currently, he is national honorary chairman of Eastern's five-year \$5,000,000 Tenth Decade Campaign.

Ives has had three concerts at Eastern Illinois University--1946, 1976, and 1986, the last appearance being a benefit in McAfee Gym for the Make Room for Art Campaign and a kickoff for the 10th annual Festival of the Arts program.

Ives recalls that he first began singing at the age of four as he helped his mother set out onions. His first public performance, he explained, came a short time later when he asked to sing with his family and they refused. He ended up with a solo of "The Ballad of Barbara Allen," the only song he knew.

In an interview with the New York Times, Ives said, "I never did make any particular effort to learn the old folksongs. They were just part of my growing up. There is a lot of singing going on in Jasper County. We were 40 miles south of the rich black dirt, and we couldn't raise more than a nubbin except in the bottom land.

"I started singing about as soon as I could talk. It was just something that went on in our family. My Grandmother White came from Kentucky near where Lincoln was born. I bought my first banjo when I was 10 by taking orders for Larkin's soap."

Ives played left guard on the EIU football team, which was a member of the Little 19 Conference at that time. During the years that Ives was at EIU, the Panthers grid squad had a combined record of 18-3-1.

After leaving EIU, Ives wandered throughout America, visiting 46 states during the heart of the Depression.

Ives said that he rode freights and traveled on "hard roads" during this period, often asking restaurants for some food in exchange for some singing. "I kept my clothes clean," he explained, "and I often wore my EIU college sweater with letters on it."

By the end of the 1930's Ives had knowledge of lyrics and tunes of more than 200 songs and was well on his way to becoming America's most famous ballad singer. "I suddenly realized I had a pleasant way to pass the time and make a living," concluded Ives, who later became a star in many other areas of performing arts.