

Homecoming spirit has survived changes

By Barry Smith

Through the years many traditions have been lost and many changes made, but the spirit of Homecoming has survived as Eastern welcomes its returning alumni for the 59th time.

From the nostalgically simple parade opening Eastern's first Homecoming in 1915 to this year's festivities spanning more than a week, Homecoming has been one of Eastern's longest and most treasured traditions.

However, like the university itself, Homecoming has grown and, at times, faltered through more than a half-century of changes.

This year, the Interfraternity Council (IFC) sponsored the election and coronation of the Homecoming queen which has been handled over the past few years by the University Board.

Also, Homecoming will be bigger

'Gabby' directing 'Rosencrantz'

By Jim Dowling

The Homecoming play this year, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead", will be presented again at 8 p.m. this Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Fine Arts Playroom.

The play centers around the two minor characters from Shakespeare's play "Hamlet", Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who become the major characters for this year's homecoming play, which started Friday.

Admission for the comedy is \$2.50 for adults, \$1.50 for children under 12 and \$1 for students.

The play is directed by E.G. Gabbard who has directed the Homecoming play every year, except two, since 1947.

Gabbard came to Eastern in 1947 and has since done almost 100 plays at the university, not including productions for the Charleston Community Theatre.

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"over-all" with more activities and "better organization" from the Homecoming Committee headed by Ron Wilson and Lana Griffin, Bob Cabello, assistant director of student activities, claimed.

But, those changes seem small when compared with the first Homecoming celebrated 60 years ago which, following morning chapel services, was opened by Trapps band parading through Charleston escorted by two decorated autos filled with clowns and nine lovely "butterfly girls."

Borrowing the idea from the University of Illinois, which established Homecoming as a feature of college life in 1912, about 200 of Eastern's total 551 graduates attended the 1915 reunion.

Excitement was so high for that premier Homecoming that Eastern trounced Shurtleff College 52-6 for the

'R & G' refreshing

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Gabbard said that there was some competition with the Will Rogers Theatre at the time because the film version was being shown at the same time the Theatre Department had decided to do the play.

In 1948, Eastern was celebrating its Golden Jubilee. At that time, though, Eastern was called Eastern Illinois State College. Gabbard did the play "Blithe Spirit" by Noel Coward that year for the Homecoming production.

Other homecoming plays presented over the past 30 years were "Arsenic and Old Lace" in 1949, "Goodbye My Fancy" in 1950, "The Tender Trap" in 1956, and "The Rainmaker" in 1957, all directed by Gabbard.

In 1958, an original script by Eastern faculty member, Dorothy Coleman, was presented.

The play was titled, "Our Brothers" and the plot evolved around the period of the Lincoln-Douglas debates with one act devoted to the activities of the Underground railroad during the period of the Civil War.

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biggest point-spread ever in a Homecoming football game.

A pattern quickly developed for those early pilgrimages to the old alma mater, with a chapel service opening the one-day affair, followed by a parade, a football game and usually an informal dance in Pemberton Hall.

The Homecoming theatre performance became part of the tradition in 1928 with the production of "Trysting Place."

In 1930, on a suggestion from the Eastern News, the first Homecoming queen, Ernestine Taylor, was elected and the event was extended to two days.

World War I and influenza combined forces to cancel 1918's Homecoming.

Chapel services were discontinued after 1933 and such unique activities as the 1937 beard contest - featuring local "He-men" - and a town barbecue in 1938 lasted no more than one year each.

Returning alumni in 1943 saw a Homecoming basketball game instead of the annual gridiron contest because of a small enrollment caused by the war.

Homecoming has seldom been dull as witnessed by spectators of the 1965 parade.

That year, a float sponsored by the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity displayed an impromptu bonfire when it caught fire from the exhaust of its towing vehicle.

Homecoming has not been without its criticisms and controversies and in 1972 and 1973 saw two of its longest-standing traditions become the subjects of some furor.

In 1972, returning alumni were denied their traditional parade when it was decided that the Homecoming committee could not afford both the parade and residence hall and greek house decorations.

Subsequently, the parade was axed. It returned in 1973, however.

Homecoming in 1973 was marred by discrepancies in queen campaign practices and resulted in a decision by President Gilbert C. Fite to have no queen that year.

Last year's Homecoming also featured something new when a male, Tom Wade, entered the race for Homecoming queen, garnering third place, his own bouquet of carnations and a place in Eastern's history.

But, despite the changes and controversies, Homecoming at Eastern has retained the purpose it was originally assigned.

Whether it is Trapps band in 1915 or Harry Chapin in 1975, Homecoming activities are designed to entertain and pay tribute to the important people in Eastern's almost 80-year past—the alumni.

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