

RAMPAGE '92

Revisiting the Hill a popular pastime

By Richard J. Dalton Jr.
Staff Writer

If you want to grasp the history of Homecoming weekend, listen to what Dr. Joe Roberson has to say.

Roberson has been attending the events since the 1940s, long before he graduated from the UNC School of Dentistry in 1960.

"During (World War II), it was rather quiet. People had 'A,' 'B' and 'C' gas stamps," he said, referring to the gas rationing stamps issued during the war. "(People with) 'A' stamps couldn't travel as much."

Roberson was able to come to UNC during Homecoming weekends because his father had a 'C' stamp and was a state employee, which enabled him to get more gas.

"My Dad was a Duke supporter, but I didn't like Duke," he said. "I was the black sheep."

But the rivalry was accompanied by a great deal of anticipation and enthusiasm. "We looked forward to (the weekends)," he said.

During the 1940s, World War II affected Homecoming weekends, and during the 1960s, Vietnam had its impact. "People felt like it put a damper on things," he said. "It had an effect on people's attitudes."

The 1970s witnessed the recurrence of gas rationing. Because of the gas shortage, many people did not attend Homecoming weekend, Roberson said.

Each decade uniquely affected the weekends, but having fun has remained an important part of them, Roberson said. "That's what stands out more than anything," he said. "People just get together, (and there is) social camaraderie."

Roberson said that although now there were more people, hotel rooms and restaurants, the essence of the weekend remained the same. "I don't think things have changed that much, and they don't need to," he said. "It's still full of Carolina companionship."

Elizabeth Jenkins, a 1990 University graduate, shared Roberson's sense of the weekends' camaraderie. "You feel pretty welcome," she said. "The large University seems small (and) a little more intimate. It's a good time to see people."

Homecoming weekend motivates Bob Powell, who graduated from the University in 1972, to call his friends before coming back to Chapel Hill.

"Getting together with friends is what really stands out," Powell said. He has attended eight homecomings since he graduated.

"It's usually a beautiful time to be in Chapel Hill — the leaves are changing; the weather is nice," Powell said. "I guess it's better when the team wins," he added.

Homecoming boosts local economy

By Nathan Bishop
Staff Writer

Local hotels and restaurants are anticipating a large influx of business this weekend when parents and alumni descend on Chapel Hill for Homecoming festivities.

"Of course, Homecoming or any football weekend is going to be a big economic weekend for Chapel Hill, Carrboro and all of Orange County," said Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce President Joel Harper.

Harper added that although graduation weekend traditionally brought

the town the most revenue, Homecoming weekend was important in attracting return visitors throughout the year.

Local restaurateurs also expect business to boom this weekend.

Keith Norris of Slug's Restaurant said he expected the restaurant to be packed during Homecoming weekend.

"Part of the reason for our large influx in customers is due to our close relationship with the Carolina Athletic Department," Norris said, adding that the restaurant hosted dinners for athletes during Homecoming weekend.

Norris rated graduation weekend as "the biggest of the year" but said that the

Saturday night of Homecoming weekend was among the top-five busiest nights of the year.

Gene Mayhall, a spokesman for the Omni Europa Hotel in Chapel Hill, said that barring rainy weather, the weekend would be a financial success.

"The combination of the season and Homecoming weekend equals a full house," Mayhall said.

Zane Carden, a spokeswoman for the Siena Hotel, said hotels would increase rates because of the high demand for rooms from out-of-town visitors. "Homecoming weekend has been booked up since the beginning of May."

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