

Skimmer Memories



HOUSTON HALL BOARD

20 April 1967

ROBERT HAWLEY

By Monday, another chapter in Penn's story of Skimmer will have been written; a glance at past episodes conjures up memories of 1964, the year of the riots in Franklin Field as drunken students attacked members of the Administration. Or the MSG-sponsored "silent show of 1965," or, finally, the revival of Skimmer last year this time under the auspices of the Houston Hall Board, as is the case for the 1967 version.

The Houston Hall Board was founded in 1929 by H. H. Director Paul Hartenstein, with the purpose being "... to carry out such projects as shall be for the best interests of . . . Pennsylvania . . . and the welfare of the Student body." Composed of six seniors and six juniors, the Board operates as a semi-autonomous body under the Student Affairs Office. Responsible for movies at Irvine, coffee hours, Spectaculars, etc., the 12 undergraduates rely heavily on Houston Hall Director, Anthony S. Coddling, Assistant Director, Harold K. Vickery, and a well-organized heeling program for assistance. HEELERS ADD CREATIVITY Approximately 330 men heel each semester, each averaging over 200 hours of work for the Board. According

to Gregg Springer, Senior member, “the heelers do much of the art work, publicity, and help carry out the projects of the Board.”

While the Board is fraternity-dominated, Keith Sachs, one of the two independents on the Board, claims, “selection procedures are based entirely on merit, and to eliminate the possibility of one house dominating the Board, only one member of a fraternity can sit on the Board at one time.” The heelers themselves meet twice a week and are thus given an opportunity to infuse their personal creativity and imagination in carrying out the Board’s work. One off the criticisms leveled against the Board is its inability to appeal to all interests on campus. Treasurer Jon Strom, emphasizes that “the Board tries to entertain as many facets on campus as possible, but it is impossible to make everybody happy.” A poll was distributed throughout the campus at the beginning of the year to sample student opinion, and during each semester the members informally poll students to keep up with current interests. In the past, the Board has also been criticized for its lack of creativity and diversity, but recent trends seems to have ameliorated many of these difficulties.

The HHB receives \$4,000 per annum from the Student Affairs Office and the remainder of its \$45,000 yearly budget is operated on a break-even basis which depends on the profit or loss from the Board’s many endeavors. It receives no money from UPSG. Chairman Norm Scott explains, “95% of the Student Unions across the country operate similarly to Houston Hall. Temple’s is subject to the Student Government and results have proven unsatisfactory.” Sachs added, “UPSG should not be the sole representative of the student body; there should be a diversity of opinion, and our function is a social one—theirs is outside this sphere.”

THE INADEQUACY OF IRVINE One of the constant problems plaguing the Houston Hall group is the inadequacy of Irvine Auditorium in terms of its acoustics and seating capacity; it is simply not large enough to attract the big entertainment a school the size of Penn deserves. In the future the Board hopes to make greater use of the Palestra, but its gymnasium set-up inhibits the desired effect. And the Performing Arts Center, in its present plans calls for a seating capacity of only 2,000. Next fall, the new Board will be expanding the “Great Evenings in the Theatre” program to include both Broadway and Off-Broadway productions. This year HHB has sponsored the Shakespeare performances, the “Fantasticks,” a Burlesque show, and the Supremes. The Board also promoted the opening of “The Committee,” which provides free entertainment on weekends at the H.H. Snack Bar. Skimmer is its last big fling of the year. The Board is optimistic about its performance at Franklin Field and is expecting over 4,000 screaming Penn students. Saturday at the river should compliment the Spectacular in fine fashion, since Penn’s crew has miraculously surmounted the “Charlie Brown League” philosophy of the Athletic Department to compete effectively within the framework of the Ivy League. All indications point to an exciting chapter in a book already reaching the proportions of a classic. The HH Board is awarding this cup to the winners of the “Skimmer Olympics.” This is one of the many activities sponsored by the Board.

ATTEMPTS ARE ALWAYS made to push cars into the drink, but this year no one succeeded. A couple of coeds did get wet, however.



Photos by Barry London

MEN AND WOMEN wore the ever-popular straw skimmer hats, and drank a malt beverage that comes in cans. (Beer isn't allowed in Fairmount Park.)

Franklin Field Braces for Skimmer

27 February 1967



The Chiffons, the Young Rascals, and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles will highlight the Skimmer Spectacular tomorrow night at Franklin Field providing sounds that will include the Motown beat, soul music, and a frenzy of fast, driving music. Ever since "Get a Job" hit the charts in 1958, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles have held a top spot in the lists of performers that hail from the "soul" of music, Detroit. From their first golden hit of "Shop Around" to their latest releases, such as "You've Really Got a Hold On Me," the group has been in great demand on the nation's campuses. • Robinson, who founded the group, a songwriter of some small renown (Bob Dylan has called him "today's greatest living American poet"), has supplied such top-notch recording stars as Sonny and Cher, Marvin Gaye, and Mary Wells with much of their material. REPRESENTING THE BIG CITY The Young Rascals four talented, young men who got their start at Harlow's in New York achieved national prominence with their first million-seller, "Good Lovin'." Characterized by a restlessness in their musical scores, the Young Rascals make very show a discovery night as improvisation and individual personality bring to each of their songs a spontaneity that parallels the reigning atmosphere that is Skimmer. The rock-and-roll aficionados that are still sober at the end of the Young Rascals' performance will be eagerly awaiting their trademark: an improvised musical goofball that is midway between jazz and rock and which embraces each style of music on the modern scene today. The Chiffons, who attained stardom with recordings like "He's So Fine" and "Sweet Talkin' Guy," round out Houston Hall's Spectacular with their melodic Motown sound. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FRIDAY 4:00-6:00 Second Annual Skimmer Olympics featuring In the Bag Race, Orange-Pass contest etc. Hill Hall Field. FRIDAY—4:00-6:00 Finals of the IF Relay Drinking Championship being held at Smokey Joes. Bring proof. FRIDAY—8:30—Skimmer Spectacular at Franklin Field. SATURDAY—1:00 -?- Crew races at the River. Bring plenty of refreshments and pray for sunshine.

Penn Rocks With Swinging Skimmer Weekend

15 August 1967

by Liz Yusem

Skimmer Weekend at Penn is like Labor Day in Ocean City —All Hell breaks loose. It is a time for drinking, partying, and in general, “blowing your mind.” Appropriately named for the white straw skimmer hats which were so popular among Penn men ten years ago, this weekend is a continuous bash which sets the campus reeling from Friday afternoon until the wee hours of Monday morning. Traditionally, Skimmer is the last tension-relieving fling before Spring semester finals. Most Penn undergrads, not about to let exams cramp their style, go all out to make this the biggest and best party weekend of the year. Skimmer this year was held under cloudy skies, but, despite the weather, the “old college spirit” was generated in megaton blasts. Friday night on Franklin Field was a huge success as nearly 3000 students spread their blankets in the muddy turf and watched such famed performers as Martha and the Vandellas, The Temptations, the Eisely Brothers, and the Shirelles. Dungarees got dirty and countless cans of brew were lost in the ooze, but no one seemed to mind. Houston Hall Board, sponsors of the gala event, were among the first to comment that they had indeed done a perfect job of planning. Saturday morning after the usual pre-10 A.M. cocktail parties, thronging hordes of students trooped down to the banks of the Schuylkill River where they were witness to the second show of the weekend with maybe a crew race or two thrown in, A couple of bleary-eyed coeds found themselves floundering helplessly in the brink, but for the most part, the afternoon was tame. Three senior Honor Societies Sphinx, Frairs, and Hexagon, and the junior honor society Phi Kappa Beta, were scheduled to race, but the match was called off at the eleventh hour due to the condition of the contestants. The frosh and JV crews did finally race against Cornell, but somehow, the outcome was never revealed to the eager public. About 4:00 P.M., Penn undergraduates put an end to the jovial festivities and departed, leaving a full night’s work for members of the Fairmount Park maintenance squad. After a relaxing dinner downtown or on campus, couples spread out among the thirty-four fraternities for an evening of partying and dancing. Each fraternity had secured a well-known band plus an unlimited supply of free booze. Sunday morning about two saw the whoopee-weary gang trudging home to the comfort of the dorm or apartment and a whole night of heavenly rest. And Sunday, they were up and at it again. Several braver fraternities sponsored joint cocktail parties, while others hosted brunches and open houses. But the pace was beginning to wear down. All the kegs were empty and young ladies were falling asleep on their dates’ shoulders. As Sunday night drew to a close, the entire student body of the University of Pennsylvania said a silent prayer for the health and safety of future skimmers, and eyelids drooping with lack of sleep, they sadly and reluctantly opened their books for the long trek ahead. The University has been

celebrating the Spring rites for many years, but the name Skimmer has come into living color only recently. Skimmer weekend, the only one for which Penn men are pardoned for bringing their hometown honeys, was originally called "Callow Day" in honor of crew coach Rusty Callow. About 1948, it was decided that a special weekend should be established to honor the hard-working men of the Quaker shells and their personality-plus coach. The Callow Day weekend became immediately part of Pennsylvania tradition until Mr. Callow accepted another position at Annapolis. The students were incensed and voluntarily abandoned the weekend that bore the Callow name. But, Coring had to be celebrated in some way, and so, Skimmer was born as a monument to the time of flowers, and young men's fancies. The festival spirit and enthusiasm of this celebration increased yearly. By 1957, the rites of Spring had nearly been forgotten as Skimmer was termed "a howling melee" by an official University report. The school officials even thought of moving Skimmer out to Valley Forge where less damage would be done. In 1963, the Granddaddy of Skimmers reared his foaming head and Penn's stately campus rocked for weeks afterward. 4,000 undergraduate men went beserk, knocking over trolley cars and pitching tiny Volkswagens into the river. During a mass riot on Franklin Field, the Dean of Men was slightly injured in a scuffle with students. When the dust had cleared and the insurance companies had settled all damage claims. Skimmer had been wiped from the records as Penn tradition. "The good name of the University is being endangered," said former Vice-President for Student Affairs Gene Gisburne, "by a few undisciplined students." 1964 was the year of the big gripe. Skimmer was positively outlawed and the kids, upon smelling the clean, fresh Spring air, were restless. A few brilliant individuals hit upon a solution whereby Penn students could have a mock-Skim-mer. It would be christened Remmicks and would be dry and orderly. The students complied, and Remmicks weekend was altogether successful. The following Spring, the University Administration blessed the plans for Skimmer 65, and the creaky wheels started rolling. By 1966, Skimmer was again a well established, though somewhat modified, Penn institution.

The highlight of Skimmer Weekend is the Saturday afternoon boat races on the Schuylkill when undergraduates flop on the grass, their friends in the river, and do just about everything but watch the crew races.

DOWN AT THE RIVER, the Schuylkill, that is, an estimated 10,000 revelers (not all students) watched the crew races. At least that's what they said they were doing.

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Skimmer - The Legend Lives On

JAMES J. RESTIVO 20 April 1967

It's Skimmer!!! Skimmer Penn's combination of Labor Day in Ocean City, Easter in Fort Lauderdale, and Nero at a Roman debauch is about to break loose. Skimmer the famous (or infamous) spring weekend that sets the campus reeling from Friday afternoon until Monday morning is primed for explosion. Skimmer 48 hours of drinking, partying, brawling, singing, general hell-raising makes Penn Number 1 in the Ivies in whirling, stimulating entertainment. Named after the straw hats that were once popular with the Penn male. Skimmer has seen more ups and downs than the elevator operator at the Washington Monument. Many years ago, spring and the Schuylkill river were synonymous with rowbottoms and unofficial partying on the river's banks.

In 1951, the pregnant spring attitude of the fun-loving Pennsylvanians resulted in the birth of the first Skimmer called Callow Day, in honor of a Penn crew coach, Rusty Callow. When Callow left, so did Callow Day. Only (!!!) Skimmer remained. The off-again, on-again spring weekends continued until the 1960's, each successive Skimmer getting a little more out of hand than the last. Finally, in 1964, all hell broke loose in Franklin Field, when drinking was allowed at the Friday night spectacular. (There was probably the same amount of drinking then as there is now, the only difference being that they were permitted to bring liquor in, while the Penn student of today must use clever, underhanded tactics to slip booze past the eyes of our astute and alert campus cops.) The Dean of Men got punched out, his wife got grossed out, and Skimmer got tossed out by the Administration. REMMIKS NICE TRY! The next year, Remmiks Weekend appeared. (Yes, Virginia, that's Skimmer spelled backwards.) Under MSG sponsorship, the Spectacular stank the sound system wouldn't work

That, sports fans, brings us up to Skimmer, 1967. And the campus is mobilizing for action. The Wall will be forgotten for a while, and the only Be-in will be at the Skimmer events. Punchbowl and Penn Comment issued their Skimmer publications this week; the IF Council kicked off the festivities with a Battle of the Bands spectacular. The pigs are greased for the Skimmer Olympics, and most of the campus' fraternities will be boasting their best bands of the year on Saturday night. The DP Editorial Board may even sit down and have a drink together and you know that means the spirit of Skimmer is upon us all. As for the Skimmer Spectacular, about the only thing that could ruin such a fine line-up of entertainment for Friday would be a hellish Philadelphia rain. Rumor has it that the Houston Hall Board has been doing Apache anti-rain dances in the dark of night. What-the-hell! If it rains just bring your umbrella and we'll all get drunk and drenched together.

It's a miracle that the 4,000 ticket-holders didn't throw MSG into the River on Saturday. Skimmer was a shadow of its former self as Remmiks Weekend, and last year the spirit was reborn again under the auspices of the Houston Hall Board.

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