



Office of Public Affairs
Division of University Advancement

News Release

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Release No: 0809-043

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 2008

61-Year Rose Float Tradition at Cal Poly Universities Started With a Simple Challenge

POMONA, Calif. — The Cal Poly Universities are preparing to celebrate the 61st anniversary of its Rose Float tradition.

Every Jan. 1, students from Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo observe a long-standing tradition in the Tournament of Roses Parade. Students from the two universities have designed, constructed, decorated and financed entries to the Tournament of Roses Parade every year since 1949.



The Cal Poly Universities float program boasts being one of the few self-built floats in the parade.

What is now a 61-year tradition actually came about much by accident.

Don Miller, a student who was then attending the California State Polytechnic School's Voorhis campus (a forerunner to Cal Poly Pomona) and majoring in ornamental horticultural, had always wanted to get involved in the Rose Parade. Miller's father was in fact a former Tournament of Roses president.

In September 1948, Miller received a call from Rose Parade officials, asking if Cal Poly could have a float ready for the Jan. 1, 1949 parade to replace an entry that had just dropped out. Miller, without checking with any campus administrator or faculty member, committed the university to an entry.

At that time, the Voorhis campus was an all-male enrollment devoted to agricultural studies. As word of the "challenge" spread, the Voorhis campus community pulled together to meet the deadline. Much-needed support and guidance came from two instructors: Oliver "Jolly" Batcheller from ornamental

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horticulture and Quin Conard of agricultural engineering. A student committee was also formed with Miller serving as chairman.

University history has it that the first parade float was created with a modest \$258 budget. With few resources, desperate builders found foliage to decorate their float through “heavy pruning” of campus plants and midnight flower raids.

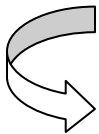
The theme of the 1949 parade was “Childhood Memories.” Cal Poly submitted its float “Rocking Horse,” which depicted a large a rocking horse that did not rock. Riding on the float were the young children of faculty, including Batcheller’s and Conard’s. The float earned the parade’s Award of Merit.

Since then, the annual Rose Float project has garnered another 44 awards (totaling 45) as well as grown in size and scope, involving both campus communities in Pomona and San Luis Obispo.

Other landmark years include the universities’ first use of hydraulics for animation in 1968, the first use of computer-controlled animation in 1978, and the first use of fiber optics in the 1982 entry.

Involvement in the rose float project highlights the Cal Poly Universities’ learn-by-doing philosophy as students spend nearly a year developing these decorative floats from design conception to welding together steel and pasting petals to driving the contraption down Colorado Boulevard.

The 2009 Cal Poly Universities float, “Seaside Amusement,” marks the 61st consecutive time students from the Pomona and San Luis Obispo campuses will provide an entry in the Tournament of Roses Parade. The float features a fun, lively and whimsical seaside boardwalk featuring an assortment of amusement rides and attractions.



NOTE TO MEDIA: Online press kit with downloadable photos, music and stories available online at <http://www.csupomona.edu/news/rosefloat.shtml>.

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