



# Bar None



– C.J. McAndrews –

Bar None was born in a spirit which typified Western and Country life. Students at the University of Alberta were organizationally structured so as to polarize interaction both academically and socially. World War II was past and the problem was even more pronounced with the student population consisting of worldly veterans, along with the younger inexperienced high school graduates.

The Aggies, reflecting their heritage, observed the situation and committed their energies to a resolution. The faculty structure was supported by academically oriented groups such as debating and literary clubs, and further socially by Faculty Clubs.

The Engineers' Club for example, had its own parties, the highlight of the year being the Engineers' Ball (a formal at which one of the most popular and beautiful girls on campus was crowned as Engineers' Queen). Functions were closed to all other students. Reasons for being independent were fabricated as in the case of the Ball, it was to protect the Queen from being kidnapped by the Artsmen. Exception, when to the Engineers' advantage occurred – An Aggie who was in the Engineers' confidence was invited to the Ball as courier of the Queen's scroll. No one would hijack an Aggie for the scroll. Artsmen were not wise enough to even suspect an Aggie as courier.

Intramural sports and social activities were not popular – thus difficult to organize: Fraternities dominated the social lives of some, which mitigated against a broad interaction amongst the larger population of a small university (3500 students).

Clubs such as the Outdoor Club, which attracted a reasonable cross section of students was unsettled due to diverse desires of the more and the less mature. Other clubs were created for the veterans while many of the married students (a new phenomena on campus) preferred a more intimate off-campus life in the company of close friends.

The veterans worked hard and played hard. Assinaboia Hall was home for many of them and the residence warden was Colonel Warren. Card games and beer was, as expected, a common pastime. However, beer was not allowed within a mile of the campus, thus Colonel Warren was confronted with a conflict between regulation and practise. One night early in the term of 1956, he walked into a room of smoke, cards, beer and veterans. The group paid him little attention and no recognition. When he said “Do you know who I am – I am Colonel Warren”, a hefty student with a large black

moustache who was standing back of the door when the warden walked in, pushed the door closed with a slam and stepped forward. He said “Oh! Colonel, happy to meet you – I's Squadron Leader McPherson.” The veterans paid little notice of others, especially the younger, non-veteran students.

It was Howard Fredeen, a post-graduate student in Animal Science starting in the fall of 1945, coach of the Golden Bears wrestling team, and of all things, one of the leading performers in the first ballet presented by the neophyte University Ballet Club, who suggested to the Ag Club that the diversity of experience and maturity of its members provided an opportunity to establish a presence on campus of far greater significance than merely a reputation for kidnapping the Engineers' Queen. With executive support . . . and the names of the Powers brothers and Frank Belye come to mind . . . he proposed to the faculty that class attendance be “forgiven” for a two-day period each spring to accommodate competitive events that would challenge the skills, wits, and inventiveness of all students and faculty members. The green light was given and he developed a series of semi-serious activities with a content best illustrated by the “skill-testing” quiz prepared by the professor of Horticulture Science. One of the true-false questions on this quiz was “You can lead a horticulture”. The professor, who shall remain anonymous, did not reveal the correct answer before departing for a new appointment at Guelph. Activities climaxed in a barn dance held in the Drill Hall for all participants and their chosen partners.

The participation by students and faculty members was overwhelming and plans were laid immediately to consolidate it as an annual event. Those responsible for planning, true to the original intent, brought their wits and inventiveness to bear in designing something bigger and better. Attention focused on the barn dance as the star attraction to foster intra- and inter-faculty interaction. This was seen as one way to cross all boundaries created by the diversity of faculties, clubs, and fraternities and thus involve the entire campus in an annual activity that was uniquely an Aggie event.

Urban Pittman, President of the Ag Club in 1947-48, his executive members, and colleagues led the way in this development. Their inventiveness centered on methods to entice everyone on campus to attend an Aggie sponsored mixer, a good old Western hoedown. Publicity was the key. It could not be ordinary and plentiful; it had to have a catchy twist to it, to make the students curious or to otherwise persuade them to attend. The thought to bar none from attending plagued the minds of the Aggies until the answer flashed before them as clear as lightening.

“Prepare a brand; the brand would be  $\bar{O}$ , which would be translated and explained after everyone was curiously asking what  $\bar{O}$  meant.”

The brand  $\bar{O}$  was printed on thousands and thousands of little stickers, each about three quarters of an inch by an inch and one-half in size. The stickers were plastered on doors

and windows, on foreheads, caps, coats, books, and everywhere and eye on campus might fall. The stickers could probably still be found stamped on the doors or walls in the dungeons of the Arts building. Not one word was said, as to what the brand meant, nor what it related to for a couple of weeks. But everyone saw it and wondered what it was and what it meant. Only a very few guessed or recognized it as a brand – the term “Bar-None” began to emerge. Then it was announced as a brand which read “Bar-None”, but to what it referred was not explained. Not until everyone was asking what “Bar-None” meant, was it revealed that the Aggies had organized a big barn dance to be held in the Drill Hall for everyone to attend – Bar-None.

The hoedown was a great success, with an admission charge of thirty-five cents per person. A branding chute was constructed at the entrance door and all students were branded with a purple  $\bar{O}$  stamped on the wrist. A conclusion was to have the function as an annual social.

A parade was organized to advertise the 194-1949 barn dance. Sid Lore and Rip Kluffus were the key organizers. They brought in chuckwagons, manure spreaders, tractors and livestock to attract attention (mooing half-tons were not yet invented at that time). Buck Godwin stole the show by saddling and riding a donkey carrying a large sign which read “Saddle your Ass and Come to the Dance.”

Howard Fredeen, Gordy Ross, and don Wenham were among the star performers. Sorties of their fun, their antics and of their dedicated hard work have been told at alumni reunions. Urban Pittman smoked Bull Durham (roll your own), which had to be rolled with one hand if one was an Aggie. Urban bought the stuff by the case and it would all disappear at Bar-None time as the Aggies tried to prove their fame. The real prize, and probably the real reason for the thefts of Urban's tobacco, was the Bull Durham tag which dangled at the end of the draw strings of the tobacco bag. With the bag in a shirt pocket and dangling tag, the Aggie was recognized with respect.

The Bar-None dance moved from the campus after a few years to the Exhibition Gardens. A problem which was quietly hidden while on campus became more obvious at the Gardens. The organizers and the property owners could not keep the dance dry. It was later moved to the Kinsmen Centre and the problem moved too.

The celebration was expanded upon over the years. What was a one night stand in the beginning had been a full week of festivities in recent years. But the spirit of sharing, of being objecting, assertive, and cooperative has continued to be manifested in the plans, preparations and participation in Bar-None.

The spirit of the West, the Rural West, the Pioneers, and the Builders has made the University of Alberta a better university and its graduates are better people of the world.