

Squelching misconceptions of Engineering Week

The Editor of the *Gateway* tells me I probably have a "unique" view of Engineering Week, or Queen Week as it is sometimes called. Whether he means my experience in being in charge of it in 1977 and 1978 have allowed me to know more about it, or simply that he thinks I am out of touch with the rest of the non-gear campus, I'm not sure. Regardless, I think it's good fun, an asset to the student life of Engineers and other students who participate, and probably to overall University life.

Most faculties on the U of A campus have had some type of celebratory week, and there used to be a campus-week, Queen Week with parades and contests.

Possibly the reason professional faculty students are about the only ones to still have events (Engineers, Aggies, Bacus, etc.) is their non-competitiveness. Although you have to work hard to get good marks, in Engineering, at least, you must be able to work cooperatively. Most major projects are done in groups, and in problem seminars and on assignments you are expected to get help from other students and T.A.'s. Photocopying assignments is, however, frowned upon. The cause is problems set up in this way because that's how real Engineering work is done. One of the most damning things you can say about an Engineer in industry is that he or she has trouble

working with other people. The sort of self-centered zeal needed if one wants to get into Law or Medicine (ie. a large portion of Arts and Science) isn't required there. (I'm not saying this in condemnation of Arts students. I have a degree in Arts with an English major and I was as independent, competitive, and academically services as anyone else there - it's just a different situation.)

Here is where Engineering Week is an asset to the Engineering student.

The same type of cooperative work is required. You get to know everyone else in your discipline and work with them as an athlete (the various races), an actor, director or writer (skit nite), sculptor (ice sculptures), or just as a body guard or other miscellaneous hanger-ons. I knew hardly anyone in Engineering until I started playing in the Chem. Eng. band. After Queen Week it became a lot easier to get through since I could get help from my classmates as well as those ahead of us.

Over the years a great number of people who are not Engineers have been involved in Engineering Week. The sports teams tend to get upset when you bring in ringers (makes it too much like Intramurals, eh?) but there's always room for outside enthusiasts at the various parties and evening events such as skit nite (although you've got to be quick to get tickets - especially to the Boat Race Social). Most of the outside people are the girls on the kicklines and their friends. Since Engineering has largely been a faculty of male students the girls who get on the kickline tend to be from faculties with more women in them, such as Home Ec. and Education.

The existence of female kicklines (despite the usual token male kicklines) is one of the controversies of Engineering Week. Should this barbaric practice of getting up in front of a room of ogling (unless they're first year students) men and dancing, be put an end to, or does anyone have the right, if they so choose and the others involved so choose, to put on a display of

kickline dancing? I recognize the utilitarian argument that the greater good of society may be served by infringing the personal rights of a few, but I think we've been under the thumbs of Alberta's too-long powerful moral majority to infringe an individual's right to go ahead and have a good time in this way, without being infringed by a new group's moral standards.

Flaunting authority and society, but remaining acceptable means walking a fine line and accepting changes in society. Years ago it was acceptable for the Engineers to carry a vat of dye around and paint Artsmen blue. People value their personal security more today. And there are abuses. The annual Med-Eng. mud fight was cancelled after many years when students on both sides began to take it too seriously and people started to get hurt.

Similarly it has been decided that there is a potential risk in kidnapping of Princesses that someone may get hurt. It's unfortunate that force is used, since the best attempts take real wit. One year one of the women was phoned by a man identifying himself as a newspaper photographer. He showed up later in a (rented) brand new Sedan, with another guy - both wearing suits and carrying press-style cameras of the time. The princess had no idea they weren't the real McCoy, until they had her in the car and announced "You have just been kidnapped". Another one was done through a local radio station - where a group of students from NAIT arranged for a technician to take the interviewee through a non-existent studio into a waiting van.

We still have the ice sculptures and stunts. The best thing about them is their political comment. The U of A has several times made National headlines with stunts like the theatre marquee that was changed to read "Pierre Trudeau - The Man Who Would Be King" with "Peter Lougheed on the other side, or the classic sculpture of Mr. Lougheed in a turban leading a camel past a pile of oil barrels - "Blue-eyed Sheik".

My favourite is probably the carefully grouted and painted Mayfair Park sign which replaced the Hawrelak Park sign in 1977. I've heard the sign hung in city department for a while (some people agreed with the perpetrators) until the supervisor cracked down.

The worst was probably the dummy hung on the High Level Bridge. A number of people were very rudely jolted from their early morning reveries seeing a body out there in plain sight.

Again, the Engineers have had to accept societal change. In Edmonton, the Treasure Hunt has a list of items to be found ranging from ulglations (sir) and vintage Playboy issues to street signs (which may be gotten legally) and everything must be obtained legally.

In Calgary they follow the older format of judging the most outlandish object that can be brought in. This has included Police Car doors, the sign from the front wall on the Drumheller Jail, and a dinosaur from the zoo (they were approached to help move the others, after that). Here it was felt things were a little out of hand when someone with a friend in the military brought in a howitzer.

Similarly, skits have gone from extremely funny lampooning to downright disgusting (From Med show down to Law School Stag quality). And of course it's lucky there's no law against stupidity or the editor's of *Godiva* last year would all be in jail. Some people might like them there anyway.

Out of space and time and I haven't even got to Lady and Lord Godiva (those brave souls), or the annual fight between the *Gateway* and the Engineers. Anyway, this is my view. Engineering Week is fun, it's non-carcinogenic, largely organic though not as much as Bar-none, and even if you're a hard-working pre-Law feminist it might be nice to take a few moments to stop and view the ice sculptures.....

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- lots of photos of us at work, showing what a wonderful, exciting job putting out a paper seems to be if you haven't actually tried doing it.
- demonstrations of how layout is done (More fun than jigsaw puzzles! More challenging than Rubik's Cube!)
- free newspapers from the past (guaranteed collectors items), and for serious archeologists, a peek at bound issues from the days when people like Marcel Lambert, Joe Clark and Don Sellar worked for us.
- a suggestion box, for people daunted by the fact that letters to the editor must be signed.
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