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President Zacharias
Lee Robertson

75th Anniversary Mailing List
Bowling Green, Ky.—After 55 years, Homecoming at Western Kentucky University has the same purpose and many of the same activities that it had when it began.

"We want you to come ... to advance the institution and to establish in its life a great annual Homecoming Day when we can get together and renew old friendships and exchange experiences," Henry Hardin Cherry wrote in 1927.

They celebrated that first Homecoming with a pep rally and an open house. Before the game, a 50-cent dinner was provided for those who ordered tickets in advance.

When Westerners return to the Hill Oct. 31, the 1981 Homecoming will celebrate the University's 75th anniversary, and an array of Homecoming activities, centered around the Diamond Jubilee theme, "Foundation for the Future," will be something alumni and friends will remember for years to come.

Homecoming in 1927 was an excellent way to show off Western's new football stadium, which stood where the Ivan Wilson Center for Fine Arts stands today.

The Homecoming of 1932 was original, with a "Depression Supper" providing a free meal for about 2500 people.

The Depression Supper, "because of its novelty, its economy, its sincerity and its building of good fellowship, will long be remembered as one of the highlights of the 1932 Homecoming," said one newsletter.

Ticket prices were 75 cents in advance and one dollar at the gate due to the bad economic conditions that year.

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About this time, in the early 1930s, the Homecoming dance emerged as a way for alumni and students to "get together" the night before the game.

Another important part of the early 1930 Homecomings was the mass chapel held in Van Meter Auditorium the morning of the game.

The schedule of events in 1933 said that during the mass chapel everyone would be given a chance to deliver a one minute speech as, "a boost for education in Kentucky, for Western, for any worthy cause, or as a call for militant loyalty."

In 1934, the Homecoming game had no winner. Western played Howard University to a 0-0 tie.

Football games were suspended during World War II, so Homecomings were not held during that period.

In 1949, the first Homecoming Queen, Teddy Lou Johnson, was crowned. The crown was somehow misplaced, and Miss Johnson wore a crown made of cardboard.

Former Western President Kelly Thompson's daughter, Pattye, was crowned Homecoming Queen in 1955.

Homecoming expanded to three days in the 1960s, and in 1970, the Homecoming Game between Western and Eastern Michigan was one of the most "exciting" in Western's history. Both teams were ranked in the top 10 nationally. Tenth-ranked Western upset sixth-ranked Eastern, 45-6.

The "Hilltoppers," who gained national recognition in popular music during the 1950s, were guests of the University for the 1972 Homecoming. Members of the group, Billy Vaughn, Don McGuire, Jimmy Sacca and Seymour Spiegelman, had two good records, "Trying" and "P.S. I Love You," and they entertained in their Western letter sweaters and beanies.

Many changes and unusual things have happened since that first Homecoming in 1927, but the traditions, like the bon-fire and the pep-rally; the purpose, and the spirit have long remained a part of Homecoming on the Hill.