COLOR POST TRADITION

The Color Post was a tradition at the University of Puget Sound for many years. Dr. Edward H. Todd, who was President during its founding, was exceedingly interested in it and carefully planned all of its basic details. He had studied various traditions of the Ivy League colleges in the East and particularly the University of Chattanooga. He finally decided that a western version of the Tap Day at Yale might be something which could be used as a basic idea, although not copied. The Color Post Ceremony was founded in 1916 when the College was down at the old campus.

Its basic philosophy was to relate the alumni to the current class on the campus, so that the alumni would always feel that there was a class representing them; also, inasmuch as the Color Post was painted four different colors, each color represented a class, and it had three different rows of numerals on it. On the left-hand side was the number of students who registered in the class, the middle number was the year of the class and the right-hand column was the number of graduates who graduated out of the class. Dr. Todd anticipated that these would go back to 1893. Quadrant one was purple and represented law and good government; quadrant two was cardinal, with the class of 1894, and represented religion and the religious tradition. This was especially significant for the Methodist Conference which had started the University and kept it going in spite of great and dire sacrifices and crises. Quadrant three was yellow and represented science and was dedicated to the original class of 1895. Quadrant four was white and was dedicated to the class of 1896 and represented the liberal arts tradition or the pursuit of truth in all phases.

Dr. Todd wanted the catalogues each year to represent the color of the class
coming in and for that reason the early catalogues had a different color each year and repeated the fifth year.

The theory of the Color Post was that the incoming freshmen would march in through the gates of the Color Post and the student body president would certify that those people marching in had qualified for admittance to the College. Then they would march by, pausing at the Color Post for a moment, to feel that they were then inducted into the College's student body. Then the President of the College and the President of the student body would shake hands with them and officially welcome them into the student body. When they had marched through the outer gate past the Color Post and the inner gate, they would then sing the Alma Mater and then they were definitely a part of the College tradition.

In the graduation process, after the ceremony, the inner gate would be swung open, the seniors would march by the Color Post, and in the latter years, a slit was put in the side so that the students could drop their student body cards in and always have a student body card in the interior of the Color Post. After shaking hands with the President and the Student Body President, they marched out through the outer gate and were officially members of the Alumni Association. They clustered around the outer gate and sang the Alma Mater. In many cases, eyes were dim because of the tremendous memories and because of the impact of the Color Post ceremony.

Dr. Todd and the Board of Trustees dedicated the new campus on June 8, 1921. This was three years before it was moved from Sprague Street. They dedicated it at the center of Warner Street, between what is now the library and Tenzler Hall. The action of the Board of Trustees was that there be a canopy built over it and it would be the alumni shrine. The rock which is now at the south end of
Jones Hall was involved in this, as the cornerstone of the campus and to be a part of the Color Post ultimately. However, the Color Post canopy was never built. Dr. Todd envisioned the fact that some of the bricks and stones from the other building down town would be used for the alumni shrine canopy. The stones deteriorated and the usefulness of the bricks also deteriorated so it was not possible to do this.

The Color Post ceremony was used for many years but after World War II, and the G.I. bulge came, it was not possible to process a very large freshman class of six or seven hundred through, nor was it possible to process the seniors going out. The fact that the College grew to such a large extent it was not possible to have the graduation ceremony in Jones Hall which simply meant that the logistics of having the Color Post ceremony, both in and out, was no longer feasible. This was also made apparent by the fact that about this time there were a tremendous rivalry between the College of Puget Sound and Pacific Lutheran College. I remember one time, opening my door to get the morning paper at 3500 North 18th (the President's residence), and the Pacific Lutheran Kissing Post fell into the hallway. The rivalry between the two schools was exceedingly keen. Pacific Lutheran students stole the Color Post, damaged it immeasurably, and we replaced it on three different occasions. After we had replaced the original one that was stolen and had it painted properly and the numbers properly replaced, they came over and sawed it off and took it away again. This rivalry led to some damage on their campus and considerable damage on our campus. They took acid and etched into the stones in the arches and it was only after considerable expense that we were able to have this repaired.
This finally meant that it was necessary for the administration at both Pacific Lutheran and the College of Puget Sound to call together student leaders and say that this rivalry had gone as far as it could. Pacific Lutheran put their Kissing Post inside a building, as I recall, and we tried, very sincerely, to make it so it would not be possible for this vandalism to constantly continue.

In order to make the Color Post vandal proof, the men at Todd Hall put a concrete Color Post in the center of the Campus Green, halfway between the Music Building and Jones Hall. It was properly painted and we thought the days of vandalism were over. It proved to be a very great challenge, however, and the first thing we knew the Color Post was being constantly vandalized by being painted with practically anything that would be degrading and despicable. When finally we cleaned it off on at least a half dozen occasions, someone pulled in a full track jeep, hitched a chain to the Color Post and pulled it over and drug it away. We never did know exactly where it went. The brass plaque at the top was lost and fortunately, the Buildings and Grounds men found it and it is a part of the memorabilia of the campus today.

The Color Post was a great tradition. I always felt that Dr. Todd did a magnificent service in establishing it and structuring it and making it an on-going tradition. The Alumni Association, for a long time, called their magazine, The Color Post, and as long as the college was small and we did not have the unusually large number of students after the War and a more mature student body. Of course, in the latter part of the sixties, these traditions were held by the students to be anathema because it had a considerable quality of nostalgia about it. I do think it
was a great tradition and I was sorry, in a way, that we outgrew it and that it was not possible to continue it. I once talked to Dr. Todd about it in the latter part of his life and he said, "I can understand, Doctor, with the growth of the student body and the fact that we are graduating over a thousand students a year, this tradition which meant so very much in its own time could not be continued."