

The History of Sign, Shake & Ring

Our student orientation tradition of signing the enrollment book, ringing the bell in Old College Hall and shaking hands with the President has its origins in the late 1880's or early 1900's. The administrators during that era asked the members of each incoming class to sign a ledger book register as evidence of their enrollment and as an acknowledgement of the cost of tuition.

By the 1950s, the tradition of signing a register had fallen into disuse and "welcoming" the incoming class also consisted of upperclassmen/women making their lives miserable. The incoming class members were known as "rooks" and hazing was the order of the day. It seemed inconsistent that the "rooks" would be allowed to do anything as significant as ring the OCH bell upon their arrival.

In the late 1970's, the University added a new tradition of ringing Old College Hall bell upon the new students' arrival. But the bell ringing tradition was applied haphazardly at best. The OCH bell had traditionally been rung to signify events of major and minor importance (from presidential investitures to athletic contests) so it may have seemed natural to extend it to members of the incoming class to herald their arrival. The tradition of signing the ledger was not reinstated until the mid-1990s when interest in this early tradition was renewed. In 1996, Eva Krebs, Vice President of Student Affairs, brought back the tradition of signing the ledger book at orientation. The original ledger book from the late 1880s or early 1900s was even found with the help of orientation coordinator Rebecca Campbell and Becky Weaver. Yet after several years, Rick Read, then Archivist and Curator, reclaimed the ledger book for the Archives. However Read expressed his love of the old bell ringing tradition to his student intern, Becky Weaver. When Weaver became the undergraduate student body president in 1997, she placed emphasis on the bell and thus the two traditions of signing the new Book of Enrollment and ringing the Old College Hall bell were successfully reunited. Now The Book of Enrollment has been signed within sight and sound of Old College Hall for many years and "records the names of those who will honor and sustain the mission and core values of Pacific University and is dedicated to these students and future alums in a spirit of community, connection and trust."

Also in 1996, President Faith Gabelnick joined the processional of students who after signing the ledger book received a personal greeting from the President before going on to and ring the OCH bell. The "Sign, Shake & Ring" tradition as we know it today is a demonstration of the University's commitment to its new students.

In 2005, President Phil Creighton instituted a new chapter in the tradition. Students, on the evening prior to their graduation at the Baccalaureate ceremony, return to Old College Hall. Inside the Book of Enrollment, they find their original signature from their arrival on campus, and sign their name again to signify the completion of their academic career at Pacific.

In August, 2009, President Lesley Hallick joined her name to the Book and then ushered in hundreds of new students to keep the Old College Hall bell ringing for hours.