

# Crowd gathers at Capitol to greet national champs

By Judith A. Faruquee

A lazy Sunday afternoon before classes started, close to 7,000 people converged on Capitol Campus, creating a traffic jam that had cars creeping along the half-mile route from 322 at three miles per hour.

The excitement focused on the victorious Penn State Nittany Lions returning from the New Orleans Superdome, the winners of the 1983 Sugar Bowl.

By now it was official, too, that the Associated Press College Football Poll and the United Press International Board of Coaches both voted Penn State the Number One college football team in the nation.

The ecstatic fans echoed their sentiments over their teams' multi-victories again and again. "It's the best thing that has happened at Capitol Campus," said Joyce Susa, a Capitol student, adding: "This is the biggest thing that ever hit Capitol Campus."

And big it was. There were fire truck sirens blaring, brass bands playing, whistles and horns blowing, and everywhere people cheering and screaming we are number one. The area was a sea of blue and white Love Ya Lions and Number One banners, pom poms and Penn State hats. The jubilant throng pierced the air with their chanting, "WE want Joe."

Joe Paterno, Lions' coach for 17 years, triumphantly led the pride of Penn State to the platform where the adoring fans were going wild. Amid the ear-splitting noise, Governor Dick Thornburgh congratulated

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the Lions' success and called them a splendid team. He said, "You make the University proud and the Commonwealth proud." As he held the Sugar Bowl silver trophy aloft, the crowd roared. Then Governor Thornburgh introduced the man of the hour.

Joe Paterno's emotional remarks were what the fans loved to hear, "I want to tell you one thing," he began, "when we drove here a week ago or so, we drove down the



Photograph courtesy Jim Tyson

road on 322 and people were standing outside with signs — Will Penn State Do It? And when we came down here (at the airport) there was a big crowd to send us off. And do you know what? We wanted to win this thing just as much for you as we wanted to win it for ourselves."

There's only one word for what happened next: PANDEMONIUM. It was like New Year's Eve at Times Square. The crowd cheered with gratitude and admiration. What a night. Everybody loved everybody.

The horns and sirens drowned out the responses from the players as they made their way back to the buses. Fans shook their hands, asked for autographs and hugged and kissed the team as the players pressed through the wall of people.

Jane and Jim Stanton, '71 and '72 alumni from Lancaster, brought their young son, Seth, along for the historical event. They had figured that in 2002, he will be a Penn State alumnus.

Scott Leib, a Capitol student, said, "It's good for everybody, everybody joining in from Pennsylvania just getting together. The way the economy

declared, "Penn State is number one in everyone's minds, but number one in our hearts."

The events that brought everyone here are now history. The 49th Sugar Bowl game played on New Year's Day in New Orleans ended in victory for the Penn State Lions, with a final score of Penn State 27—Georgia Bulldogs 23.

The game got off to an exciting start with Todd Blackledge's excellent first four passes setting up the scoring touchdown by Curt Warner just 2½ minutes into the game.

It was a game with a lot of heroes. Kevin Baugh's sensational job of catching Georgia's punts, Gancitano's field goal the last 44 seconds of the first half. Walker Lee Ashley, Kenny Jackson, Jon Williams, Gregg Garrity all doing an excellent job. All the players worked fantastically well together to make it click.

From the high-pitched beginning till the cliff hanging end, it was a hard-won victory and a well-deserved one for Joe Paterno and his finest team. It was the fourth trip to the Sugar Bowl for Joe and as many times his team ranked number one. This time, having won the Sugar Bowl and the National Championship, there is no doubt what team is number one.

Victory is sweet and being number one makes it even sweeter.

is going and everybody is down, well this really did it for us."

Bob Topper, head adorned with a Santa Claus hat,



Photograph courtesy Jim Tyson

Joe Paterno and Pa. Governor Richard Thornburgh share a moment of pride, while directly above, crowd gathers at Capitol Campus parking lot to greet the team following their arrival at the Harrisburg International Airport.