

Tailgating with style from kegs to banana flambe

By MICKEY EDWARDS
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

By car and camper, they come to see the Nittany Lions play football. Kegs and cooking grills transform the area around Beaver Stadium into the University's biggest weekly party — a fest of food, drink and friends gathered for a tailgate.

"Tailgating is the only thing I know that can turn a three-hour football game into an all-day affair," State College resident Dick Monsell said. "The better Penn State plays, the longer the tailgating goes on after the game."

But tailgating starts well before the game's final whistle blows. Barry Jones of the Rec Hall Ticket Office said cars begin arriving at 9 a.m. when the parking areas open.

As 18,000 vehicles close ranks around the stadium, the early birds enjoy brunch and booze in University fields.

What used to be "Just sandwiches and Kool-aid before the game" has become a major part of the college football scene during the last few years.

The University community is well represented at tailgate outings. Most numerous are alumni, but students, parents and faculty also attend. Each group has its own customs and levels of sophistication.

homecoming

The brothers of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, for instance, bring lunch to home games, rather than eat at their Burrows Road fraternity house. Tailgating beneath the fraternity's billowing banner at one game was brother Scott Lonsdale, who said tailgating has been going on "ever since the station wagon and the pickup truck."

Tailgating has come a long way since the days of the fold-down station wagon door. More elaborate hardware and cuisine have evolved, and the folding picnic table, patio chairs and back seat cooler share the occasion with that pinnacle of America's approach to the outdoors — the recreational vehicle.

From Winnebago kitchens come such delicacies as lobster thermidor, shrimp and prime rib, served with champagne at candlelit tables.

Most tailgaters, however, find less exotic fare quite suitable. Traditional picnic spreads such as potato salad, cheese platters, deviled eggs and sandwiches are part of many pre-game meals. Other students just carry a quarter keg in the trunk.

Joe Boris, a teacher at State College High School, called tailgating a "Saturday subculture . . . probably endemic to all football games."

Tailgating is a free-form activity, which may partially account for its popularity. There seems to be no limit to the variety of tailgating one can do before or after the game.

"It makes a football game a social

event," alumnus John McKeever of Boalsburg said. He and his wife, Carol, tailgated with friends during most of the second half of the Lions' runaway victory over Texas Christian.

Altoona Campus Director Carson W. Veach, who was here for All University Day, called tailgating "a good way for people to socialize and meet the Penn State family." He added that alcohol belongs in the radiator this time of year, however.

Joseph Carney, whose sons Daniel and Thomas attend the University, drove from New York to see the game. "Today, to be a parent, you have to make an appointment to see your children," he said, and tailgating is an occasion when the whole family can get together.

Carney said he thinks tailgating got started when somebody had car trouble after a game. While some of the party worked on the car, others went out to get food and beer. When they returned, tailgating was born.

The University's tailgating tradition dates back to 1960, when the new Beaver Stadium was completed. A few alumni say something like tailgating occurred in the Nittany Lion Inn parking lot adjacent to old Beaver Stadium, which was located near Chambers.

In those days, most alumni attended cocktail parties at fraternities. Waning fraternity membership in the '60s led to the present form of football parties.

Mike Levin (10th-business logistics) said as ties and jackets gave way to "Levis and rebellion" in the late '60s, more people got "out of the game and into the party aspect."

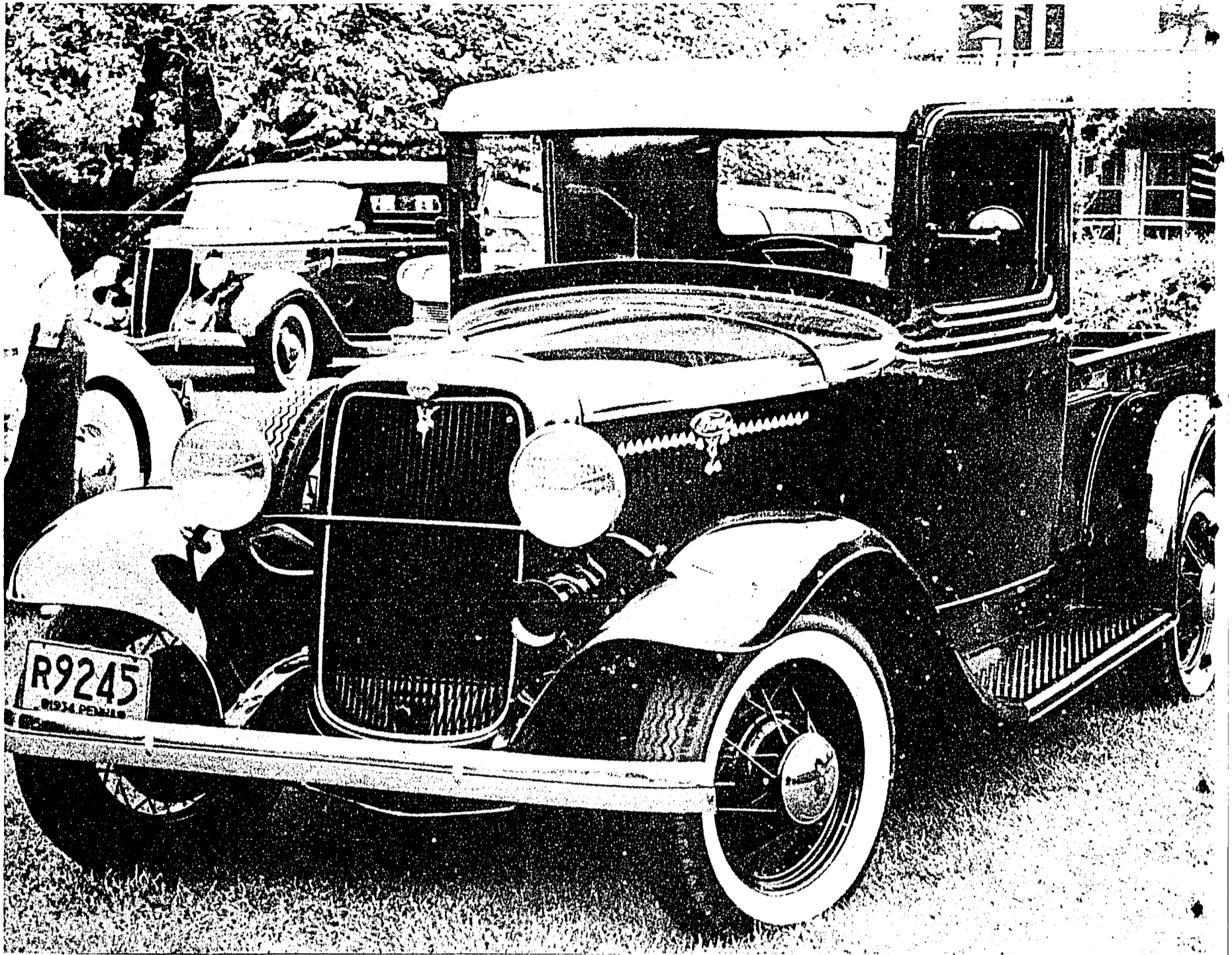
Fans come from as far away as Ohio, New York and New Jersey to see the Lions, according to Bellefonte KOA campground operator Ernie Saulsbury. A University graduate, Saulsbury said as many as 200 groups stay in county campgrounds during a football weekend.

Overnight parking for motor homes is available near Shields for a \$10 fee. Barry Jones at the Rec Hall Ticket Office said 15 to 30 groups stay there on weekends.

Those who tailgate regularly observe forms of etiquette that may escape the attention of the novice. Roaring off the parking lot in one's van after the game, scattering dust onto fellow tailgaters' desserts, is seen as bad tailgating manners by the regulars.

And for some, even a tailgate dessert is sophisticated. Dessert at alumni Bob and Lani Burke's camper one Saturday night, for example, was banana flambe, concocted by food service graduate student Peter Bordi. For "Little Peter," whipping up a London broil or Bloody Mary soup over a charcoal fire posed no problems.

Lani Burke described tailgating as an "exercise in humanity," a way of meeting friendly people, as the coals glowed in the gathering darkness of another football Saturday.



This classic 1934 Model T pickup dates back to the days when tailgaters actually had tailgates on their vehicles. The motor homes and other recreational vehicles in vogue today, on the other hand, traded their tailgates for all the comforts of home.

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