

Photo by Stelios Varlas

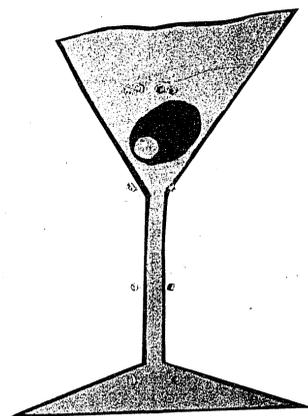


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## Tailgating - a spirited PSU tradition

By ANNE CONNERS  
Collegian Staff Writer

It has attracted almost a cult following. Without it fall wouldn't be fall, football wouldn't be quite the same. It's sun, laughter, beer, food, babies, old people, young people, flags, buses and motor homes.

It's blue and white — blue and white shirts, blue and white hats, blue and white signs, blue and white tablecloths, blue and white bumper stickers. It's a Saturday afternoon. It's Penn State. It's tailgating.

The tailgaters start arriving in droves around 10:30 a.m., vying for choice spots in the acres of grassy field surrounding Beaver Stadium. Sororities get together with fraternities, men's and women's dorm floors get together, friends get together with friends and the party begins.

Beer kegs are tapped, bars are set up, hot dogs are roasted and banquets are spread. Why? What's all the celebration for? Most people have a fairly simple answer.

"We love Penn State, that's why," said Gordon Rockmaker, a University alumnus from the class of '62. "We haven't missed a game in the yellow bird (a motor home) for 15 years."

Some fans are real diehards. Michael G. Croce, an alumnus from the class of '47, said, "I've never missed a Pitt-Penn State

game since 1940 except for the two war years."

Croce said he charters a bus for every home game from the Greensburg and Jeannette area full of University alumni and friends.

For some, tailgating is a tradition — not just boring, rhetorical tradition — but a part of their lives' tradition. Take, for example, the Siamese Elephants. Yes, the Siamese Elephants — they even have a flag.

Dave Williams (10th-management) said the elephants have been around for 15 years. Current University students recruit more students, and the alumni come back for tailgates.

But why the strange name you ask? Well, if you really want to know, the rationale is something like this:

"In eighth grade a coach did Siamese elephant imitations to get the team fired up. He wasn't playing with a full deck," Tom Vandergrift, an alumnus from '79, said.

Understand? Don't worry — the reporter didn't either.

Just like Mom, chocolate chip cookies and Christmas trees, tailgating has become part of American (oops, maybe just State College) family life.

"We've been bringing ours (children) since fourth grade and one's a freshman at Penn State now," said Mary Anne Claar, a State College resident. "It's a nice family

thing." "Once it gets to the third week in August, the kids start thinking what we'll do for a tailgate," Claar said.

Brian Strathmeyer (4th-ornamental-nursery management) said tailgating was a part of his way of life. "We've been coming to tailgates for as long as I can remember," he said. "And we always invite our friends."

For some youngsters, tailgating even marks an initiation.

One man said his child said to him one day: "Hey, Pop, how about giving me a bottle?" And the mama's gave me hell but I said you're no longer babies, you're Penn Staters now."

And tailgates can go on and on... "We were here one night till 9:30; we watched them turn on the lights," Claar said. "People would think we were nuts — we don't even know when to go home. We just keep partying."

The food at the Claar's tailgate might have something to do with the length of time they "party hearty." The card tables looked as if they might collapse under the weight of fresh fruit, cheeses, crackers, wine, mixers, chocolate chip cake, stromboli, marinated vegetables, chicken stuffed with shrimp, black forest cake, turkey, brownies, chips, pretzels and...

If the alumni know how to eat, the students know how to guzzle. Hotdogs and beer are the standard student tailgate

fare. A men's house from Hamilton Hall and a women's house from Thompson Hall got together to socialize, drink and...

"Oh, yeah, we're regulars," Sue Shaffer (10th chemical engineering) said. "We socialize, meet new people. I go whenever our house has them."

However, there was one student who was as rare as a whooping crane in the halls of Old Main. "It's (the tailgate) the pits. There's no soda," Tami Atkins (11th-geography) said. Responding to looks of disbelief all around her, Atkins added, "Yes, I go to PSU and I don't like beer."

"Headin' back to Penn State," pro-state car. And, indeed, people come from all over just to hear the Nittany Lions roar.

John Zazworsky and Linda Knisley from Arlington, Va., travel five hours to get to Beaver Stadium and sometimes go even farther to see the Nittany Lions play. Zazworsky and Knisley said they had been to Nebraska, Mississippi and Texas for a football game. Are you reading this, football players? That's dedication.

It would probably take something major, "like a funeral," Knisley said, to get her to miss a game.

Zazworsky agreed, "My nephew would have been here but he went to a wedding," he said. "He didn't like it. He thought they shouldn't have gotten married on a football Saturday."



Photo by Nathan Lester

Jim Fritchman, (9th-mechanical engineering), like other devoted tailgaters, continues partying well into the afternoon's ball games.

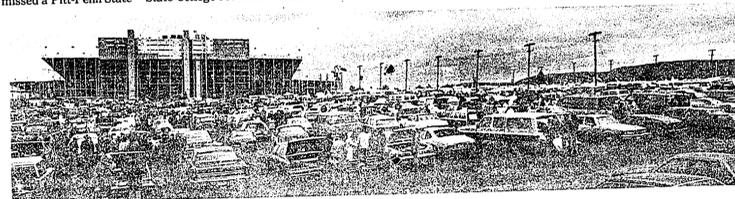


Photo by John Burger



Photo by Nathan Lester

John Haasis, (10th-biology), and John Kiloran, (7th-nuclear engineering), enjoy an ice-cold draft. During the early part of the season, beer as well as wine and liquor, works as the coolant for loyal Penn State fans in the late summer sun. Then during the later part of the schedule, as an anti-freeze to keep their blood pumping.