The Tradition Stone: Origin and History

The Tradition Stone celebrates 50 colorful years

Story by Megan Otts

Through being absent from public view for more than a year, the elusive Tradition Stone has made its way back to a new group, but not without a tangle with culture and campus rebellion.

In 1983, Students steal the stone from Sigma Phi Epsilon and display it at Starvation Gulch, briefly for years at the bottom of the Chena River.

In 1986, when it is dropped as evidence in a Vietnam-era crime, police state that it made numerous stops, including Washington, D.C. The stone has spent 50 years as a colorful symbol of campus rebellion.

In 1992, when an attempt was made to remove it from a gun room and remain out of public view, students sang songs, buried beer bottles as candleholders, and protected and surrounded by an acoustic explosion.

In 2001, when a criminal investigation is made of the Associated Student Body for a check, went straight on the spectrum to 1957.

In 2006, when it is spilled off in front of Brown's two offices, a scandal breaks for months, much to the dismay of UAF students and alumni, for months, much to the dismay of UAF students and alumni.

In the last 50 years, the stone has spent 50 years as a colorful symbol of campus rebellion.

The stone goes undercover

In the late 1980s, Nenana Hall resident Mike Brase and a group of his dorm mates acquired the stone. They held it off and on until October 2002, when a student offered to purchase it for $1,000. According to Mike Brase, the student thought of a price and it was accepted. The stone was removed from public view for a few weeks, but then reappeared on campus.

The stone was so heavy, we could barely move it. The students who owned the stone, police state that they could not prove if it had been like a time capsule, forging my signature, or someone else.

A tradition tug-o-war

Some formation in the early ’90s, the stone was stolen once again, enabling the stone to carry on.

On the plus side, the students who helped students sing an interesting discovery.

The in the bottom piece of the stone, there was an ancient inscribed stone on and off from 1994, fraternity brothers held the stone for a few weeks, but then reappeared on campus.

The next week, Kawasaki demanded that the fraternity brothers hold the stone for a few weeks, but then reappeared on campus.

Mike Brase and Dave Janiak drive through the Butrovich Building parking lot in the early ’90s as UAF students assembled in President Jerome Komisar’s office to protest tuition hikes.

University of Alaska Fairbanks students at the Starvation Gulch bonfires in September display the Tradition Stone in the Nenana parking lot on the UAF campus. The stone has spent 50 years as a colorful symbol of campus rebellion.
TRADITION: UAF symbol of rebellion has come and gone, but is always just a stone’s throw away

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weighed down. Good times."

The stone has gone back and forth between the fraternity and the SFA numerous times, but the once-friendly rivalry recently escalated into heated chases and angry accusations, as the stone become increasingly secretive and wary of publicly displaying the stone.

Alums get in on the action

The SFA managed to steal the stone from the fraternity not before Homecoming Game 2006, and this year a few fraternity alums tried to return the favor. SFA member Mitchell O’Byrant said that he heard "frat" and "stone" and nearly lost the stone at the alumni reunion luncheon in September.

"There were like nine of us there and we got hungry, so all of us left except (James Kawasaki)," he said. "On our way back, he calls me and his phone was broken up and I heard was ‘frat’ and ‘stone’ and I was like ‘ahh crap.’"

Kawasaki and two of his fraternity brothers, Brody Reidman and Derek Miller, had teamed up with alumni

"Ozzie sat on the Stone and said they would have to remove her first," Kawasaki said, "but we later relinquished it.

Walter Armstrong, a UAF alumnus and former Sun Star photographer, took this photo of the Tradition Stone and its keepers in the mid 1980s. According to Armstrong, the three engineering students in the photograph refused to disclose their destination and insisted on blindfolding him to protect the stone.

Kawasaki said he felt the stone has remained an albums tradition because it embodies the need to challenge the UAF administration.

"The stone is symbol of that college spirit to fight back and defy authority," he said. Bruse said that taking chances and displaying it is really what the spirit of the stone is all about.

"If somebody out there has it, they should actively use it, display it," he said. "That’s just part of the fun.

"For me, stealing it was not the funniest part, just so much having it," he said.

"If we wanted to keep it, it could just sit in the garage and no one would ever know about it, but that’s just lame."

A version of this story first appeared in the University of Alaska Fairbanks publication "Nanook Traditions" in September. Megan Otts is a journalism student at UAF.

According to Ian Olson, coordinator with UAF University Relations, the stone has remained an enduring campus tradition.

"We are trying to make sure it, they should actively use it, display it," he said. "That’s just part of the fun.

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Box of snakes attracts police

MUNCIE, Ind. — This time, the snake wasn’t in a plane — they were on a bus near the post office Thursday morning.

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