

MECCA Memories and Comments
(E-mail responses (raw) from 50's & 60's alumni / 19MAR01 / GWF)

Hank Baust (BSEE 1968)

Sorry, I wouldn't be much help, but I do still have my straw hat with the green band. (My daughter always gets a chuckle when ever I bring it out.)

I would enjoy hearing about the activities at the school of Engineering at Iowa.

I've been working for the Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB (Dayton, OH) for over 30 years in wind tunnel testing, specialized instrumentation and now aircraft inlet and nozzle integration.

Dick Kelly (BSEE 1958)

The only clue I remember is one made up by some CE's (sanitary option ?)
"Don't go too far or you will pass the bar." It referred to a "barometer screen" in the sewer system. It took several beers at the old Annex--100 steps from the Engr. Bldg. --to figure that out. We had a great time and got to know some of our classmates better. IC was (is) a great place to go to college. I am retired from Arizona State Univ. where I was in EE for 32 years. I was interim chairman for the last 18 mo. and was doing the senior design project course. I found two seniors who didn't know one other senior; what a sad college career.

(Additional comments from Dick on Doc's place)

Doc Connel was the owner; Ted or Teddy was the Owner after Doc left for Las Vegas. Doc had the great memory for names. I am a native of IC and taught from 60 to 65 when I got my PhD and came to ASU. At that time Engr was only 5 yrs old at ASU and Aaron Donnelly who taught me DC Circuits at SUI was at ASU and talked me into coming there. He got his degrees from Iowa as well. He was from Bonaparte, IA. He died about two years ago. Mary, my wife, still has a sister in IC and we get back every so often. I am anxious to see all the work that has been done on the plant.

John Affre (BSME 1960)

It was great fun, but I can't remember details from that far back. Good luck.

Jim Crosheck (BSCE 1964)

Great to hear that a vital part of engineering at U of I will be revived!

After spending 3 years as an undergrad, being humiliated by the grad students, and at least 3 more during grad school, getting even - you would think I could remember some of the clues. I wish we had kept a listing of them because many were really quite clever. I DO remember many of the locations - the attic and the steam tunnels, Vernon (not Mt. Vernon!) which is a former stop on the railroad, Plato one of the small "towns" nearby, Paul & Jo's, obscure locations in the library, etc.

Good luck on getting it going.

Some of the great stories came from John Russ, about the sparring of the engineers and the lawyers. I remember some of the pranks played on the law school (horses in the court room, green concrete shamrock on the lawn, farm wagon assembled in court room). (Remember Jayaraman and the plaque he prepared - great calligraphy - that was hung in the court room in the new law building?). Remember his tale of the all-girl band that was "kidnapped" by some lawyers to mess up the Engineers' Week Ball? Or the time they diverted the royal court entrance at the Ball and sent in a number of pigs? Reviving the old rivalry would not be a great idea, but it lead to some interesting tales.

James Kauzlarich (BSME 1950)

It is good of you to e-mail the classes from the 50s. I am happy to be on your e-mail list.

I have retired from teaching at Univ. of Va., but keep an office and continue to do research. Presently I am at Cambridge Univ., England until late June, as a Visiting Scholar in Engineering.

Jim Huff (BSEE 1962)

Gary, I don't remember you but would probably recognize an old picture of you. I was always greatly involved in MECCA, being a prankster and engineering nerd. I was in EE, BS in 62, MS in 64. I would be nice if today's students could revive MECCA but I really believe that the politically correct in control of the universities would frown upon it.

We had great fun giving the Law students hell and pulling pranks on them. The smoker was great with the students blasting the profs and the profs dishing it back. I always played in the Smoker band (for what that was worth). Remember when the law students kidnapped our queen candidates, hauled them off to dinner in C.R. and then ran some pigs into the River Room when it was time for us to vote? I seem to remember that a cute little Poland White won. Tom Breese and I found the stone in an old country cemetery south of Iowa City when we were seniors in 1962 ... got our picture in the Daily Iowan (drunk as hell). The greatest feat was to try to "Drink Hills dry" after the smoker. We did a fairly good job of it.

I was the one who dyed the white mice green so they could be let loose in the law building. I still have the old leather gloves with green fingers that I wore to let them swim around in a waste basket filled with water and green Rit dye.

Another EE student, Jim Fuhman, and I had a lot to do with hiding the stone in 1964. I guess the students thought the clues were a little obscure because they came into Little Bills Pizza and Beer Hall where I was the piano player around midnight and said the seniors had found the stone and that they wanted to buy Fuhman and I a beer at Doc's Annex (you must remember that place). I went down there, and when I entered the door I was passed to the back of the room over their heads. Fuhman was already there. They made us chug one of those large pitchers in less than five minutes or we were going in the river. My wife heard about that the next day and wasn't too proud.

I have been on the same job for 37 years designing missile guidance systems (Raytheon). I have also been a part-time professor of electrical engineering at Calif. Polytechnic University for 24 years and will join the faculty full-time this fall when I retire from industry. We have a very large engineering student body (1500 undergraduate EE students). It seems the old esprit de corps has been lost to today's kids. The poly students are still active in HKN but not much else. Kids today are afraid of the powers that be and, as a result, probably could not get the same antics going that we had with MECCA. There was nothing at all wrong with our pranks, stone hunt, drinking too much beer, harassing the law students, and the great smoker. I would like to see today's kids recapture this spirit. Why don't you teach them how. I would be glad to help.

Humor is important. If we had more humor we would probably have less hostility in our society. I could dredge up a million memories about MECCA. I still have a tape of myself playing the various U of I songs on the calliope. That damned tape played day in and day out from the carousel homecoming monument that the engineers built on the west side of the Old Capitol ... drove everyone nuts. And how about the cement shamrock on the lawn of the law building? Or the horse in the third floor courtroom of the old law building. (Did you ever see the movie Animal House? That movie was closer to life at Iowa in the fifties than any movie ever made. Even had the same ROTC uniforms) MECCA.

I could write volumes on it. It was a time and place. Can it be recaptured? I would like to think so. Help the students and let me know if I can help. Jim Huff

Edwin Anderson (BSChE 1956)

You are assuming that us old codgers can remember back that far. Sorry, but MECCA is one of the lost gaps in my memory.

I have no objection to keeping in touch through e-mail.

Jerry (??)

I do not remember MECCA stone clues, but I do remember tales of horses being led up to the roof of the law building, a model T assembled on the roof of the law building, and safe cracking in the engineering and law buildings. Interested in more?

Jerry Luecke (BSME 1968)

1. Your favorite stone hunt clue(s).

I don't recall any specific questions, but, if my memory hasn't failed me, the questions that went over big were the questions similar to the "mind teasers" that appear in Tau Beta Pi's magazine The Bent . Then there were ones that required multitudinous calculations. Of course, in 1950, we were doing all of these on the slide rule. Such problems would be simple today because of all the rapid calculation ability. However, wouldn't it be neat to put in a problem that required today's students to calculate the problem answer using a slide rule.

2. Your favorite MECCA memory.

Building the corn monument was my main thrust even though I was an EE. It was a most enjoyable and satisfying project because we could see the results of our efforts and it brought some publicity to engineering. In those days as engineer was someone who drove a train.

3. Any other comments or suggestions.

Find a way to get some good publicity. Engineering deserves to be put before the public's eyes. We were not able to do it in my day, but more emphasis should be put on it and there are so many more avenues these days.

Good Luck!

John Beaty (BSME 1962)

Clues as best I recollect... "you will find your next clue when you find the arrow"
...actually a Pi Tau Sigma clue.....the arrow referred to an arrow shirt, and that person had the clue.

.."kiss a virgin here and it will turn white"....refers to the black angel in local cemetery.

...MECCA memory...winning the prize for the "most handsome beard" and having the mirror held by MECCA beauty queen candidates.

...not so favorite MECCA memory.....the satellite dish would not balance the first time around....the terrible burn of the aftershave lotion used after the shaving contest

Ernest Miller (BSEE 1950)

Thanks for asking – I will respond soon since roommate Chuck Readon (deceased) was also assigned to hide blarney stone - clues led to crawl space under Engineering Building.

Stewart Zuber (BSCE 1969)

The only clue I can remember from the 68' hunt was "Bodie died on 6" There was a TV program, "Cheyenne Bodie" that starred Jocko Mahony and the Cheyenne Lumber Company was on highway 6 in Coralville. The lumber company went out of business. The final clue that year had the number 287 (?) the number of steps from the front door of the Engineering Bldg. to Doc's tavern; Doc had the stone in his cooler.

The skits that each discipline used to put on at the Union were good, as I recall we voted on the best skit and also that is when the votes were cast for the MECCA Queen. The Purple Shaft Award was also given out to the "least liked" professor in the college. I recall the stories of the pranks that were played on the law students, some of those were pretty good although costly to the Associated Students of Engineering.

I would enjoy receiving this type message.

Bob Huewe (BSIE 1961)

My favorite clue was the one about the king's throne along the east bank of the Iowa River between the Coralville dam and the interstate. When you sat in it to and looked to the northwest, you saw a skull hanging in a tree on the north side of the highway.

Beneath it, the stone was buried. I do not remember the wording of the clue. Then there was the one about a trail (Mormon???) that started on the south end of Iowa City ... or, the one about the black angel in the cemetery.

The main memory was the bonding that took place between all the engineering students.

Bill Miltenberger (BSEE 1960)

Thanks for the e-mail. I have no information for MECCA as I didn't participate in the activities. All I remember is that there were activities going on all week. I would like to receive future mailings from the Engineering College, thank you.

Clarence Asche (BSME 1959)

Since I had to work my way through college, I did not find time to hunt for the stone. The things I remember most about MECCA Week were the unique hats that engineers wore that week, the smokers held at the Memorial Union and the MECCA Ball. I am interested in hearing from you again, especially regarding current or planned MECCA traditions.

Ernest (“Ernie”) Lauer (BSIE 1969, MSIE 1970)

I remember well the stone hunt happening in my UI days, but I did not participate so can't help you with the clues. The MECCA Smoker was the big event for me.

Bob Richardson (BSChE 1964)

My mind has gone blank on clues. I just remember we drove all over the Iowa City to find the stone.

(... yes, but what about using the screening for MECCA queen candidates as an excuse to get dates?)

David Sievert (BSCE 1960)

I am sorry I do not remember any details about MECCA week. All that I remember is that it was a lot of fun. Thanks for asking.

Allen Schneider (BSEE 1966)

My memory is being greatly challenged by the details. The most vivid memories are of the year that the theme was around Batman and Robin. There was another called the Ides of March but the clues I do not remember.

As to clues, they usually required some combination of engineering problem solving. Examples that are a bit vague:

1. A block of aluminum was found from solving a clue. The block was about 2x3x1/2 inch with a Batman emblem. That was it. Students, after study decided the block was somewhat hollow. They proceeded to very carefully cut it into two or more pieces. There was a clue inside that required the weight of the block in air and in water to solve. Required some estimating and assumptions to come up with the answer.

2. A page of computer printout was found with no apparent information. It required analysis of the statistics of repeated letters to find a pattern in the document. The pattern finally resulted in a message that referenced a certain kind of pipe tobacco found at the corner drug store. When reading the tobacco label, it referenced a small village on the Cedar River NE of Ia. City. The town is still there but the bridge is closed. The next clue was found at the general stores entrance area. Other clues often referenced a street and house number in the Iowa City area. I think the town was nearly 25 miles away which was the max. distance according to the rules I remember.

There were often puzzles that included chemical problems, hydrology problems, and of course the mechanical, civil, electrical and industrial areas. The graduate students were responsible for the puzzles and usually there was one or a couple that took great pleasure in giving the undergrads the biggest problem they could find. In the end, they placed the clues just ahead of us and when Thursday came, they then placed the MECCA stone. They probably did not want the lawyers to find it accidentally.

Dennis Rhoads (BSME 1962)

It's been so long ago I don't remember any clues. I do remember going to Coralville Reservoir and looking for the Stone. I was the one who found in under some stairs in the old engineering building in 1962. That got me an interview on KSUI that Saturday.

Ted Fuhrer (BSIE 1969)

I was happy to receive your note about reviving some of the MECCA traditions. Here's a few comments:

1. Favorite Stone Hunt Clues

A. "Best Hawkeye view of a pigskin dual." The next clue was found taped to the top of the Iowa flag pole atop the football stadium.

B. "In the bed where the old man and the old woman meet." The clue was found southwest of Iowa City at the junction of Old Man Creek and Old Woman Creek.

2. Favorite MECCA Memories

A. Celebrating the solving of clues at Doc's.

B. The MECCA Ball and the skits presented at the Ball

C. Placing green dye in urinal water supply lines in the Law building rest rooms during MECCA week.

D. Having exams suspended during MECCA week.

Your note caused me to reflect upon some good memories I enjoyed during my days at the U of I. Thanks!!!

Tom Breese (BSME 1963)

Would like to send you the complete story of the prank we played on the lawyers for MECCA of 1962 -- including placing the manure wagon in the court room of the Law Building and releasing a bunch of green mice in that building. Gene Schuchert (BSME-

63) and I spearheaded this effort -- in which dozens of the engineering students participated.

Unfortunately, I am leaving on vacation but I will try to put the story together and send it to you in time for next year's event.

Emil Luft (BSME 1961)

Attached are the clues I collected during my initiation. I can't remember what year that was or what the solution to all of the clues was, but some were fairly easy, such as the Black Angel in the cemetery, Piggly Wiggly, and the golf course. I think there was an animal shelter on 380 where we spent a lot of time looking. While we were on the golf course someone fired a shot gun and scared the heck out of us. We had a very nice picnic somewhere in the country south of Iowa City.

I still have a gear that I made for initiation with signatures. Do the pledges still have to make a gear, carry it during pledge week and have to have it signed by all the members?

Donald Boldt (BSChE 1957)

My favorite MECCA tradition was the senior engineering students wearing straw boater hats with green bands. I still have mine!

Good luck on reviving some great traditions which were unfortunately lost in the 60's.

C.W. Lazenby (BSME 1950)

It's been a long, long time!

Entered SUI Engineering College in 1942, was graduated with the class of 1950 -- was off at a war in between. Stone hunt activities were somewhat downplayed during those early years of WWII, but it did go on! Currier Hall was threatened by excavations under bush-plantings one year as a clue or two was misunderstood.

In those years, Mary and Norma ran the dean's office and the library, and they were great sources for clue ideas. F. Dawson was Dean of Engineering then, and some of the stone-search activities were troublesome - and sometimes condemned - by him.

In the immediate post-WWII years, we tried to grow beards and then dye them green for the smoker and the MECCA ball. One year, a few brothers chose the wrong stuff for the dyeing process and required the ministrations of the hospital dermatology staff to save their skin. Wonder if the green beard tradition remains?

I welcome future e-mails.

Chuck Warren (BSEE, MSEE 1957-58)

Sorry I don't have any MECCA goodies for you but appreciate the e-mail-please keep them coming.

Steve Gryglas (BSIE 1967)

Please include me on your e-mail list

- Would like to be kept up to date

- Thanks

George Ashton (BSCE 1961)

My favorite MECCA clue was (1971 #10)

This week's for the wearing o' the green

With the exception of, of course, Irene

So go that way and take a peek

But remember it's a rock you seek.

Led to a nightclub in Coralville called the Dugout where a go-go girl by the name of Irene was scheduled to dance during MECCA week. The clue was hidden in her pants. The hunters had to talk her out of it ... the next clue.

I was a graduate student then and involved with setting up the stone hunt.

Bill Schoon (BSEE 1960)

Wow! What a question.

Stone hunt clues are not the kind of things I stored away. However, I do remember things like animals in the Law Building and chaining the Law Building shut with big padlocks. You can see what I thought was fun. I also remember green beards and other such foolishments. There does have to be some fun in life.

Come to think of it, I also remember the lawyers trying to find the stone before we did.

Hope you all can revive some of the fun.

Donald Tweed (BSME 1955)

Don't have any particular memories of the MECCA celebrations other than slaving to get the large letters cut out and painted for the "corncob" rocket ship we put up in the early 50's.

James Deluhery (BSME 1955)

Your memo brought back many memories as I was co-chair of the open house in 1955. We had several cars on display and I was able to drive a Jaguar 120--what a thrill. I also won the handsomest beard contest and still have a copy of the photo that was projected as I was in the hospital at the time.

Good luck

Ward Welch (BSEE 1967)

While I was at Iowa '63-'67 as an EE major we did two things. We turned a pig loose in the law library and another year, with the help of Prof. Mielnik cut out the insides of a car

and chained it to a cement pillar we poured in front of the law library and then filled it with cement.

It's been so long since I've visited Iowa that I don't know if the tradition of the law and engineering students playing tricks on each other is still carried out.

Thanks for the information.

Bud Storer (BSIE 1959)

Thanks for keeping me informed. I will be unable to make the pig roast.

Vernon Reding (BSCE 1969)

Thanks for keeping me update on the MECCA activities. I have many fond memories of attending the University of Iowa and the man activities during MECCA week. We still have a lot of Iowa alumni working for WisDOT, and we always talked about MECCA week. I don't drink green beer anymore, but have converted to the darker and heavier beers now.

I have many fond memories about MECCA week, but I always thought that the tone for the week has to be set senior leadership. It is surprising how these social events really do create opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate leadership skills.

I am especially proud of the Class of "1969". That year, we planted a large concrete shamrock in front lawn of the law school. I'm not sure if it is still there, but it remained there for a number of years. Since I ended up marrying a lawyer, I enjoyed re-living many of the pranks we played on the law students.

James Roseman (BSCE 1967)

Favorite memories: The MECCA smoker and the party down at Hills.

Gary Long (BSME 1959)

Good luck on your project. I don't have anything special to offer but remember gathering at Joe's after finding a Mecca Clue for a couple of beers.

Joe Papp (BSME 1966)

I don't remember specific clues. I do remember that we tended to review clues over a couple of beers. Some of the reviews lasted well into the night.

Keep me on the mailing list.