



Bookend Memories

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I will always value my UA experience for its major role in life and career successes, and I have many great memories of the college years, not the least of which was that ubiquitous Wonder Bread aroma wafting from Forge Street. Two of those memories are bookends of those times, unforgettable campus events distinct from academics but mind opening, nevertheless. They were very different signs of the turbulent and interesting early 1970s.

My first quarter (long before the adoption of semesters) at UA was fall 1970, and I was a brand-new psychology major. Early that quarter, students were called to

attend an assembly in Memorial Hall, the gymnasium and indoor sports venue that existed well before construction of the James A. Rhodes Arena. The subject was recent Vietnam War protests on college campuses. The region and country were still raw over recent deadly incidents such as the one at nearby Kent State University and Jackson State College in Mississippi. Students were told about new State of Ohio legislation against disruption, disorderly conduct, force and violence at a college or university, and warned about penalties of fines and imprisonment. This gave the expression, “read the riot act” a whole new meaning! Despite its grave message, I left the presentation not so much intimidated, but rather feeling a bit more educated—welcome to the Hilltop, but know the law!

Fast forward to Spring 1974. After a few changes in major, I was now a graduating accountant with four job offers. As the quarter wound down during exam week, rumors circulated about a pop culture phenomenon coming soon to campus and keeping with the times—streakers. Streakers were all around the country, seen by millions during the Academy Awards ceremony and, of course, as the hero of Ray Stevens’s radio hit “The Streak.” Nothing happened for a week or so, and then, suddenly, when the weather was right, the grapevine went wild with the news—noon today! Two seemingly endless lines stretched along the center of campus from one end to the other. A throng of thousands gathered layers deep on both sides of the sidewalk from Schrank Hall all the way to Spicer Street. Anticipation, anxiety, and excitement were palpable. At my

spot between the College of Business and Gardner Student Center, there was a crescendo of cheers and applause from the west, and there they were—three young guys wearing only Zorro masks, “streaking” between the parted sea of people toward Buchtel and Memorial Halls. They were shielded by the crowd, isolated from any authorities, who seemed to be nowhere near. Both amusement and admiration were in the air, and just like that, they were gone, never seen again, but how would we have recognized them anyway?

It was around finals week and, for me, time to graduate. I sometimes wonder: was there some significance to these bookend events? For me they were about change, about authority and the unauthorized. Both reflected the University’s life in the events of the day. Between them, there was much learning, progress, and growth for all us who were there.