

Wake up for Cut

New policies enacted to make Bonfire safer and friendlier for participants

BY AMANDA PALM
The Battalion

Long before Bonfire burns this fall, countless students will forge their way into the woods outside of Somerville to chop down trees at cut, the event where the trees to be used in constructing Bonfire are felled and collected.

This weekend, more than 2,000 students participated in first cut, an essential part of preparing for Bonfire.

Many smaller traditions exist within the tradition of Bonfire. One example is decorating of pots. Pots are the protective headgear worn by everyone at cut site.

Each pot is unique, and decorating it is a way for residence halls, Corps of Cadets outfits and other groups to identify each other and display their unity.

Rusty Thompson, Bonfire adviser and MSC assistant director, said the use of profanity on pots will be toned down this year.

"If anyone has something offensive on their pot, they can cover it up or leave," he said.

Travis Johnson, a senior redpot and finance major, said the majority of students have complied with the change.

"Some people haven't adjusted too well, but on the whole, everyone wants to do what's best for the spirit of Bonfire," he said.

"They know if you don't change your pot, you can't come out to cut. Most people understand, so they participate rather than protest."

Thompson said there are no new policies for Bonfire, but the University wants all parts of Bonfire to be safe and enjoyable.

Barbi Bernard, a sophomore general studies major, said she noticed a decline in the amount of profanity on pots at first cut.

"I went to cut last year, and there was definitely more usage of cuss words then," she said. "This year, instead of spelling the words out, people

would spell out part of the word so you could still tell what it was supposed to mean."

Bernard said she has never been bothered by the use of profanity on the pots.

"I may have a different view from most girls, but I don't think the rules are necessary," she said. "It's usually meant as a joke, and people take things too seriously."

Another tradition at cut is groding, the process of wrestling in giant mud pits to get as filthy as possible.

In the past, groding occurred both on University property and at cut site, but it is no longer allowed anywhere on campus.

Thompson said the on-campus groding policy was made because creating mud pits around campus was destroying the landscape.

At cut site, redpots are responsible for making sure no hazing or inappropriate behavior occurs during groding.

"The redpots watch out for and stop any acts that may be unsafe," Thompson said. "If something appears to be hazing, such as forcing someone to roll around in the mud, the redpots will stop it."

Bernard said women do not grode the same way men do and that the groding tradition should not be changed on campus or at cut site.

"Girls usually don't get hurt when we grode each other," she said. "It's a good tradition, and it shows how red-ass you are."

In the past, Walton Hall has been the residence hall responsible for load, in which logs are put onto trucks to be hauled from cut site to College Station. But Walton Hall was banned from Bonfire this year, and the residence hall is not allowed to participate in any aspect of Bonfire.

Thompson said no individuals were sanctioned, but the hall as an organization cannot participate in Bonfire activities.

"That just means there can't be any Walton pots, T-shirts, yells — things like that," he said.



Johnson said the action taken against Walton may have been harsh, but it shows that no hazing will be tolerated.

"I think Walton knows that if they keep it clean and behave, there's a good chance they'll be back next year," he said.

Johnson said the absence of Walton has caused other residence halls and Corps outfits to take over the job of load.

"Their loss as a dorm was felt a little bit this weekend," he said. "For load, we have to rotate every weekend with a different non-reg dorm to take their place."

Bernard said the loss of Walton Hall during

Bonfire activities gives everyone else more work to do since the traditional duty of Walton residents must be handled by others.

"They were the load dorm," she said. "Walton always did it, and they were good at it. No one else wants to do it now."

Thompson said the ban was a blow to students who live in Walton Hall.

However, he said, the spirit of Bonfire and enthusiasm toward cut should not be negatively affected by the loss of Walton.

"Most students draw spirit from their own groups and dorms, and I think they will continue to do that," he said.

CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

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