

Fall 2016

TO: El Paso High School Alumni Association

RE: The Birth of "The Claw"

When the Class of 1961 was treated to a tour of EPHS during our 50th Reunion, I was surprised and pleased that, in the historical film about our school, reference was made to my involvement in the "birth" of the Claw. In this year of Centennial celebrations, I wanted to relate how the idea came to me and to clarify its beginning, as best as my memory will allow.

During the fall semester of 1960, I was President of the Student Council. One day, while doing the dishes and listening to the radio, a story aired about the traditions of some classic college football rivalries playing that weekend and the "Trophy" they played for. Those trophies included the Little Brown Jug exchanged between the Universities of Michigan and Minnesota and the Old Oaken Bucket between Purdue and Indiana. After this radio news report, it occurred to me that the mascots of both El Paso High and Austin High schools, old crosstown rivals, were big cats, and that maybe we could exchange a shared representation, a claw, as the trophy given to the winner of the annual football game.

El Paso High was getting ready for our own traditional football game with the Panthers of Austin High School. This was a BIG event for the city! We even had a joint pep rally that annually aired on the radio - KTSM. I am sure many longtime El Pasoans remember this exciting event the morning of the football game.

I presented the idea of the Claw to the Student Council and the class representatives took it to their home rooms for a vote. It was approved. Austin High also agreed. One of our seniors whose name, unfortunately, I don't recall, designed the mold for casting. It was beautiful!!

The first game played for the right to possess and display The Claw was played in the fall of 1960. Unfortunately, the Tigers lost! That spring of 1961, when the casting was completed, senior members of the Tiger football team presented the new, gorgeous, bronze "Claw" to the Austin High Panthers at a school assembly.

I had moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1970's and lost touch with events at EPHS. Yet, as the years passed, I would wonder if the Claw was still being exchanged and if it had become the tradition I had hoped for. Once, while visiting my family, I ran into an old classmate, Lee Schwartz, then a teacher at EPHS, and asked about "my" Claw. She told me it had been stolen, but that a replacement was being cast and that it was still being played for. Years later, on the occasion of that school history presentation to my class, I was startled to hear my name included. Not only that, but the EPHS-Austin football game is now referred to as "The Claw Game". Goosebumps!

How very extraordinary and touching to think that my 16 year old self came up with an idea of lasting importance to two high schools playing a football game for the right to display the Claw. I am moved to think that the ritual remains a part of the life of our wonderful El Paso High School. GO TIGERS!

JUDITH HADDAD

Class of 1961

