

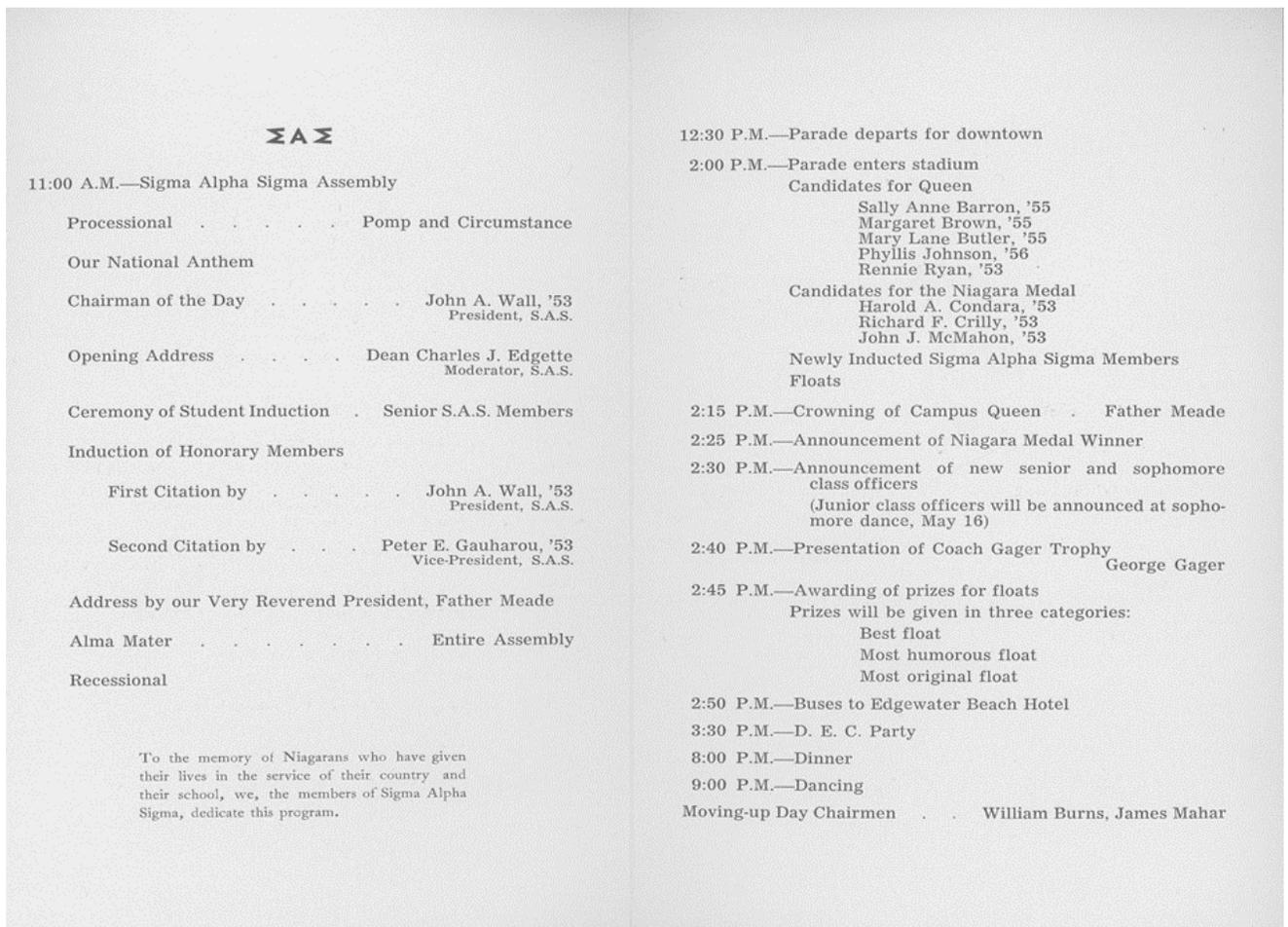
Moving Up Day at Niagara University

By Michael Broccoli

Moving Up Day started in 1948. It was a campus-wide event that celebrated each class moving up at the University and was held at the end of the spring semester. Many of the events were held in Varsity Stadium. The Moving Up Day Program of 1958 characterized the nature of the celebration:

Moving Up Day originated in 1948 and has since developed into one of Niagara's most colorful and treasured 'week-end' traditions. It formally marks a one year advance of the students' collegiate career. But more than that, it is an expression of the life and spirit and character that is Niagara.

A program from 1953 shows the diversity of events.



The Tapping Ceremony was an important component of Moving Up Day Weekend. Sigma Alpha Sigma was an honor society formed by the undergraduate class of 1933. Its members were chosen based on their academic and extracurricular achievements. About fifteen juniors were selected by being tapped on the shoulder by current members, then “the tension broke into spontaneous applause as each new member ... was led to the stage.”¹



Likely, the most enjoyable component of Moving Up Day Weekend was the parade of floats that started on campus and wound up Falls Street to Third Street before returning to Niagara via Lewiston Road.² The floats were created by student organizations and clubs and were quite diverse. Sometimes floats were based on a theme. For example, in 1959 the theme was “Ancient History.” The sophomore class won best float for their “Cleopatra on the Nile.” Second place was awarded to the freshmen class for “Ancient Sacrifice to the Sun God.” The BLA won



\$25 for best student organization float for “Ulysses,” and the German Club won second prize for its float “Heidi.” Sometimes floats were based on more serious themes. For example, in the early 1950s, during the height of McCarthyism and the Cold War, there was an anti-Communism float. Accompanying the parade in convertible cars were candidates for Campus Queen, aspirants for the Niagara Medal, and the newly inducted members of Sigma Alpha Sigma.

An interesting component of Moving Up day was the Ugly Man Contest. Its intent was to collect money for the mission. In 1959, \$63.89 was collected. As you can see from the image to the right, the ceremony doesn’t actually involve an ugly man!



An important component of Moving Up Day Weekend was the awarding of the Niagara Medal to a member of the senior class who possessed “to a high degree, the qualities of character, loyalty, personality and success in studies during his four-year career at Niagara University” (the pronoun “his” suggests an area of further research. Were only men eligible for the Niagara Medal?).³

¹ Niagara Index, May 22, 1953

² Niagara Index, May 22, 1953

³ LIB2016.13 (1956)

The Campus Queen was crowned following the awarding of the Niagara Medal. The candidates not selected became her court. Archival records refer to the “awarding of prizes and gifts to the new queen,” but we do not know what those consisted of. The Queen was also described as having “reigned” during the weekend. In 1952, Bob Mooran was crowned King, but we don’t see Kings named in other years.⁴



The first queen we know of was named in 1950. We don’t know for sure when the last Queen was named, but the last documented naming was in 1965.

- 1950 - Mary C. Toohill
- 1951 - Yolanda Yankowski
- 1952 - Kay Zurmuhlen / King: Bob Mooran
- 1953 - Peggy Bergeron
- 1954 - Elizabeth Wallace
- 1955 - Mary T. Burke
- 1956 - Mary Wallace
- 1957 - Ella Kinsey
- 1958 - Cynthia L. Aungier
- 1959 - Marjorie O’Neil
- 1960 - Marie Paonessa
- 1961 - Kathy Quaglia
- 1962 - Ann Henry
- 1963 - Peggy Lardie
- 1964 - Francine Conti
- 1965 - Kathy Tweedale



Further Research

We know that Moving Up Day started in 1948. We don’t yet know, however, when it ended. By the 1960s, it was becoming less important, as revealed in sparser coverage in the yearbook and newspaper. Further investigation is needed.

⁴ LIB2016.13 (1956)