

Student riots have longer history than Little 500

"It has been said that what happens between 6 o'clock in the evening and 6 o'clock in the morning have more influence over a student's life than anything that happens in the classroom..."

— *Indiana University Professor Ernest H. Lindley, 1909.*)

Each year when the summer is coming to a close, the permanent residents of Bloomington begin to brace for the invasion of some 30,000-plus students. During the transition period of about a week, there is sudden frustrating traffic congestion and locals can experience the very real physical danger of strangers driving the wrong way



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

down one-way streets.

That is nothing compared with the dread felt by Bloomingtonians when the students were about to return during the early 1900s. Freshman "scraps" were a tradition. Referees for the legalized melees were elected, for whatever that was worth.

Though parents of students' might be disturbed about injuries their sons received in freshman/sophomore scraps, townspeople were not all that much affected unless the encounters continued off the campus. The Harris Grand Theater downtown became a target of student rowdiness.

On Oct. 15, 1908, during the middle of the performance, student power — 200-strong — was pitted against that of the Bloomington Police and Fire Departments. (The latter crew was called because the students had started a bonfire.)

Commented the Bloomington *Evening World*, "In the general riot

that ensued, night policeman Scott Davis was struck on the hand with a stone, and a brick was shied through one of the big \$38 plate glass windows.

In Thomas Clark's book, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer*, Clark wrote that when perpetrators had been identified, the theater manager threatened to sue them. The students ingeniously formed an "Innocents Club," collected money for the window and found a hardware store owner who would replace it for \$22.

If the townspeople were tired of the periodic juvenile displays, IU President William Lowe Bryan was

equally fed up with it. In 1906, on the day after a particularly harrowing confrontation between students and police, Bryan told the *Bloomington Telephone*: "I wish to state, that I stand with the officers in their attitude toward students who carry their fun to a point where it becomes a nuisance. I am sorry if innocent students are involved and made to suffer. But when the rights of citizens are violated, they have a right to call upon the city for protection and the city has the duty to afford them protection."

Embarrassed that the university see **Looking Back**, page C2