

EASTER BUNNY ON THE CAMPANILE

By Ray Lucas

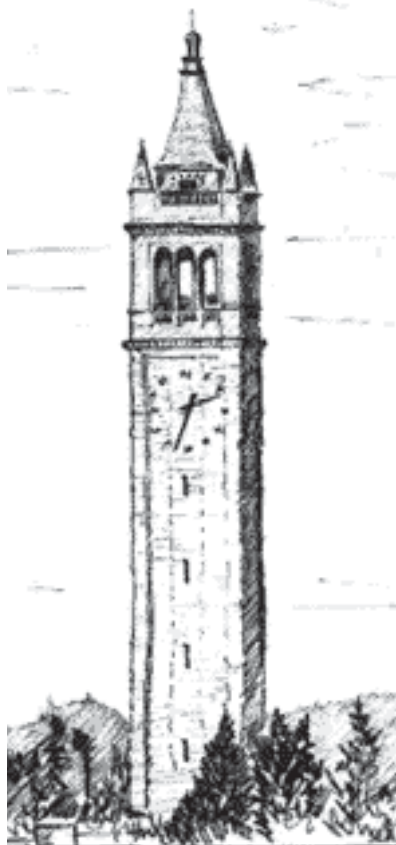
Sometime during the week prior to Easter Sunday in 1955, Norm Turner showed up with a stuffed Easter bunny. It was 2 and ½ feet tall and colorful: blue and yellow, I think. He proposed that we (members of the UC Hiking Club) place it on top of the campanile on Easter Sunday night. Several of us, thinking the idea may be possible, conducted an investigation of that possibility a couple of nights later. Facilitating that investigation was the knowledge that a resident of Oxford Hall, a cooperative living facility, had discovered that his room key would unlock the door to the campanile. After that discovery, this individual, an engineering student, during a visit to the campanile (open to visitors on most days) found that a work crew had left the door to the ladder to the bell deck open. He removed the lock and altered it so that his key would fit it also. Using that key, several of us entered the campanile, took the elevator to the observation deck, then opening the door to the ladder went to the bell deck. I chimneyed up the space between a corner spire and the center block (about 10 feet) to the base of the pyramid. I discovered that the corners of the pyramid were offset from the surface about 1 and ½ inches. This provided a handhold and a heel hold that would allow a climber to shinny up the approximately 20 feet to the base of the light at the top. We also went up the inside ladders to the light at the top and found that two people could fit inside that space and that ventilation holes along the lower edge were large enough to accommodate a climbing rope. We concluded that it was possible to accomplish our goal of placing the bunny on top.



At about midnight on Easter Sunday, we undertook the task. If my memory serves me right, in addition to my self, there was Norm Turner, Dick McCracken, Mike Soule, Lloyd Curtis, and one other (perhaps Howard Morrow or Dick Scheible). I had just reached the ledge at the base of the pyramid when the campanile lights went on. We were busted. We quickly gathered and decided that two of us would take the rap. The other four would remain secluded on the bell deck and come out later. Dick and I volunteered to go down and meet the campus police. We went down to the observation deck leaving the door to the bell deck locked behind us. The key was in the possession of the four. The elevator was still at the top. We went to the bottom and found the door to the outside was closed and locked. We opened it and found no one there. The light at the top of the campanile was no longer on. It was a false alarm. Dick and I went back up to the observation deck. We pounded on the door to the bell deck. We shouted. No response. The group of four obviously could not hear us. Dick and I went home and went to bed. At about 5:00 AM, I was awakened by the four. They wanted to know what had happened. Nothing. We later learned that the campus police used the campanile light to signal the foot patrol to phone into the office in the administration building.

We did not give up. We decided to try again on the next Sunday night. The same crew participated. Norm entered the light housing and lowered a rope through a ventilation hole. I, having already chimneyed to the ledge at the base of the pyramid, tied into it. I tied a light line to my belt-the other end was tied to the bunny. With Norm belaying me, I shinnied up the corner of the pyramid to the base of the light housing. The rope was not used for direct aid but only as a safety factor should I have fallen. Standing on the ledge at the base of the light housing I could reach two of the horns located at the top corners of the housing and used them to pull my self to the top of the housing. From there I pulled the bunny up and was barely able to reach the top of the spire and pull the bunny down on it. We had attached some wires to the bunny to fasten it on with if necessary, but they were so tangled that they were almost useless. Norm lowered me to the bell deck. The job was complete except for cleaning up and making sure nothing incriminating was left. We left satisfied. The only thing that would have improved the experience would have been to complete the job on Easter Sunday.

The next morning the bunny was in place and attracting the attention of the student community. To give a perspective: Looking up at the bunny from below, Dotty Ellis asked, "What is it, a glove?" Later in the morning, a campus work crew removed one of the glass panes from the light housing and, with a long pole, were able to push the bunny off the spire. It wouldn't have



been so easily accomplished if the wire had not tangled. Sometime midday Monday, I happened to be in the hiking club office when the phone rang. I answered it. It was the campus police chief, Captain Woodard. He said that there were rumors that the hiking club had been responsible for placing the bunny on the campanile and, if that were true, he would like to know how it was done. If we could and would provide that information, there would be no arrest or other consequences. I told him that I would check around and get back to him. I was able to contact several other members of the group and all agreed that there was no reason not to inform the Chief. Also, I think there was some pride of achievement that would be satisfied by the subsequent recognition. Anyway, I and one other member of the group (I am not sure but I think it was McCracken) went to the Administration Building and talked with Captain Woodard. We explained how the feat was accomplished. However, in loyalty to the owner of the key we did not reveal its existence. We lied - we told the Captain that one of us had entered the campanile during the day and hidden inside when it closed and then opened the door for the rest of later in the evening. The question of how we got from the observation deck to the bell deck never came up. If it had, were prepared to tell him that we had picked the lock. The Captain thanked us and said he had not thought it was possible, and that he had initially considered the possibility of the involvement of a helicopter.

[See also Daily Californian, April 20, 1955, p.1]