

## **Saving Liz from the Rally Committee**

[Note: the following description was conjured up more than 50 years after the fact ... hence, many “facts” are suspect. I have not been able to confirm any of this with other participants, and I’ve forgotten who they were, except for Liz Miller, and I’ve lost track of her. Recently Dave Rottman told me he was an observer, but couldn’t confirm nor deny anything, other than something like this really happened. John Fiske, December, 2010.]

This prank occurred in November, 1958, Big Game Week. During Big Game Week, students were not supposed to wear any red-colored clothing (Stanford’s color). Really!! The Cal student Rally Committee had set up a kangaroo court in Eshleman Court, just outside the UCHC Office, which was in the basement of the old Eshleman Hall. The kangaroo court included a table behind which several “judges” sat, dolling out “justice” to students who happened to be wearing red clothing that day. The Rally Committee (dominated by fraternity and sorority members) fanned out across the Campus, taking into custody red-wearing offenders, and bringing them to the kangaroo court for sentencing. While waiting to go before the judges, offenders were put in a stockade, which consisted of four 6-foot-tall walls of slender wooden bars with thin top and bottom beams ... no floor nor ceiling. This “jail” was about 6 feet on each side, lightweight, and easily collapsed for transport. I don’t remember what the “sentences” were ... something silly, designed to embarrass the offenders ... maybe singing the Cal “fight” song?

Some of us UCHC folk were offended by all this, especially when one of the members got caught wearing red (for other reasons than supposedly supporting Stanford) and had to go through the tribunal proceedings. Revenge was vowed! I don’t remember who hatched the plan.

We got a 3/8-inch nylon climbing rope from the UCHC supplies, and 3 or 4 of us guys quietly took the rope into the old Stephen’s Union Building (on the far side of Eshleman Court) and up to a balcony overlooking the jail. We fastened a carabiner to the end of the rope. Liz Miller, a UCHC member, who had volunteered to wear some bright red clothing and was in on the plot, sauntered innocently into Eshleman Court, was captured by the Rally Committee and put into the jail ... the only prisoner at the time. From the Stephen’s Union balcony, one of us threw the end of the rope with the carabiner down to Liz (maybe 20 feet vertical distance). Liz quickly looped the rope around one of the wooden bars and fastened the carabiner back on the rope, thereby securing the rope to the jail. We, on the balcony, pulled up on the rope, and the jail collapsed, rose into the air, and started moving up the side of the Stephen’s Union building towards the balcony.

Consternation amongst the Rally Committee!! Two or three Rally Committee guys grabbed onto the bottom of the jail and hung from it, resulting in stasis: on the balcony we couldn’t pull the jail any higher, but I had the jail and hangers-on on belay, and was braced against a vertical post on the balcony.

In the excitement, Liz had escaped to the UCHC office ... the Rally Committee members did not dare to follow her. With the jail completely unusable for its intended purpose, and many observers laughing at the proceedings, the Rally Committee called for negotiations with us. Another factor was the Rally Committee members were wearing expensive white sweaters, so they were scarcely clothed for any physicalities with us. I don't remember the details, but I think the result was an agreement that the Rally Committee would continue with their kangaroo court, but all UCHC members would be exempt from any further court activities.