

Beer Lake: Then and now

*Restructuring and beautification of pond
bring up memories of what it used to be*

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The station wagon that was pulled in September, was the last interesting thing found in Beer Lake.

Simon Ren, an OU engineer and associate director of Facilities Management, said, "I know there's some interesting stuff we haven't gotten to," but added that at present nothing will likely turn up because the lake will not be drained completely. Four feet of mud remain.

But Beer Lake, made in 1967 as a water retention pond when Vandenberg Hall was built, has a rich history not forgotten by OU's community.

Jean Ann Miller, director for the Center for Student Activities and Leadership Development, said the pond was named Beer Lake because students used to store their beers in the lake to chill them.

She said in the 1990s there was controversy surrounding the name of the lake and added that a student suggested that former President Champagne change his name if the name Beer Lake was to change.

"I like it (the name) because it's OU tradition. I don't associate it with alcohol," Miller said.

She also recalls two Big Boy restaurant dolls showing up in the lake in earlier years.

The current restructuring of Beer Lake cost \$232,000 and is expected to be complete in the spring.

The work began during summer 2002

with repairs made on the bridge. Work on the shoreline is currently underway.

Rusty Postlewaite, associate vice president for Facilities Management said, "There was a big problem with erosion. The normal water flow had made the slope of the lake steep and dangerous."

According to Postlewaite, the inlet and outlet structure repair work became a priority. Ren said two-thirds of the shoreline has been lined with boulders and the remaining third will be lined with geotextile as a solution for shoreline protection.

When the lake refills with rainwater, the level will be kept at two and half feet lower than previously, Ren said.

"In this way there will be a strong water retention capacity but the water will be let out more slowly meaning less damage downstream," Postlewaite said.

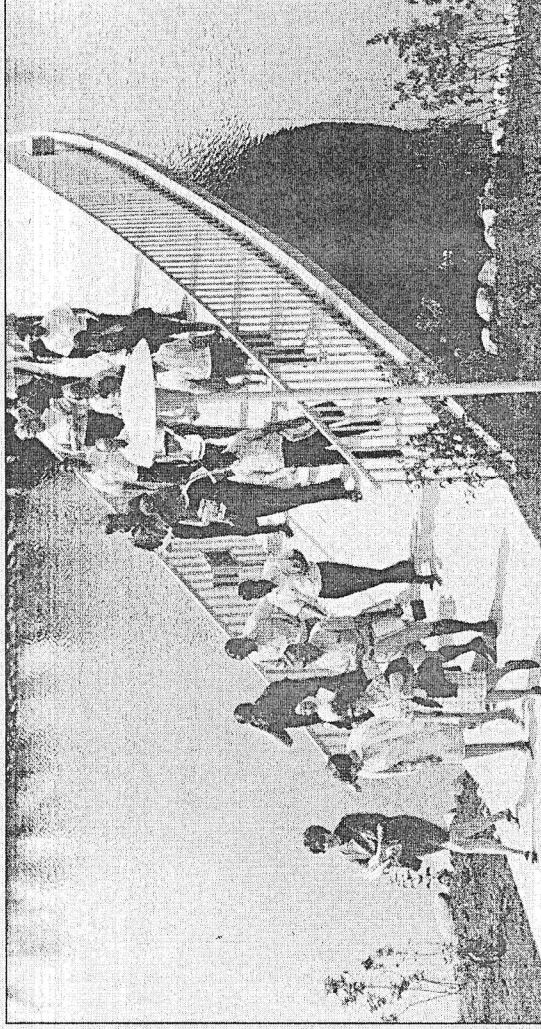
Ren added that rainwater collected in parking lots on the main campus eventually drains into Beer Lake, which means during a storm, any litter also ends up in the lake.

According to Postlewaite, workers will plant trees in the spring shortly after the ground thaws.

Ren said the master plan includes cleaning Beer Lake's polluted water in conjunction with the Clean Water Act in neighboring jurisdictions but has no time frame on the project.

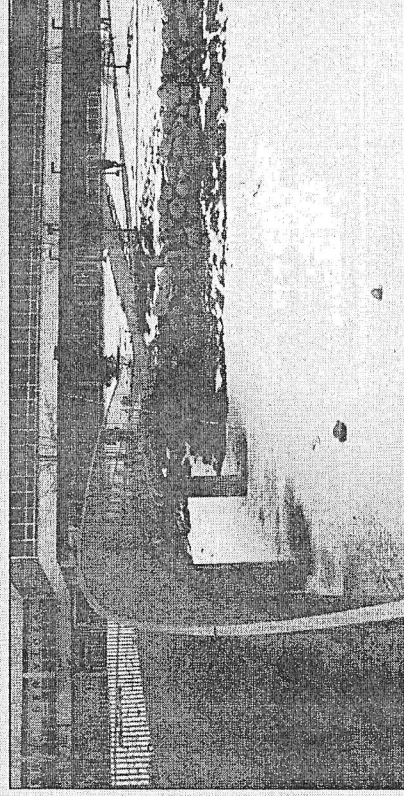
Perhaps when that is accomplished,

Miller's idea of holding a WOCOU canoe racing event in the Lake will be possible.



Above: Beer Lake has been a staple on OU's campus since it was built in 1967.

Left: Stones have been brought in to support the banks of Beer Lake during the restructuring project.



Above: Kresge Library Archives

Left: Marek Olech/The Oakland Post