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BACKGROUND ON 59TH FORESTER'S BALL

MISSOULA--

On Jan. 16-17, 1976, members of the Forestry Students Association (FSA) of the University of Montana School of Forestry will present their 59th Annual Forester's Ball in the Men's Gym on the U of M campus in Missoula. The ball has been noted as one of the largest and most colorful events on the University's social calendar, and has grown significantly since its founding 60 years ago.

The Forester's Ball started as just a small school get-together of 20 or 30 couples back in 1915. Each year it grew bigger and better until it began to attract the attention of people across U of M's campus. Sometime shortly before 1924 the foresters opened it up to the public and started charging admission. Since that time, the ball has grown to an attendance of close to 1,000 couples during its two-night presentation each year.

Expanding income for the ball resulted in the idea of using profits for a loan and scholarship fund for students who were in need and had volunteered at least 10 hours to the ball effort. Thus was established the FSA Loan and Scholarship Fund. This fund is almost entirely supported by proceeds from the ball. The size of the loans or scholarships depend largely on the income of the ball in a given year. In the last few years, due to the increasing expense in putting on the ball, the fund has not been up to what it had been further back in the history of the ball. Much help has come through donations.

In 1926, after hearing what the foresters at U of M were doing, Paul Bunyan paid his first personal visit to the ball. Since that time Paul has become sort of a godfather to the foresters, and he and Babe the Blue Ox have never missed looking in on this annual event. In 1954, LIFE Magazine came to the 38th ball and published a feature story about it.

A Forester's Ball has never been a simple task. Over 5,000 man-hours on the average go into putting on the affair every year, and planning for each successive ball begins right after the one before it. Planning and construction is done by student volunteers and the foresters cordially invite anyone interested to come and help in all the activities. Ball Week this year will begin on Jan. 12 with the Forester's Convocation in the University Theater (it is hoped that Paul and Babe will arrive in time!). Wednesday will see members of the Forestry School's champion Woodsman's Team inviting all comers to take them on in various events at the annual Boondocker's Day. The playday will begin with the traditional dropping of free tickets in the oval at noon. During the day, tickets will be given to all individuals or teams that can beat the foresters at their own skills. As usual, any lawyers encountered will be given an especially bad time.

And then, on Friday and Saturday, the week will climax with the presentation of the Forester's Ball itself. A mock town with a flavor of the "Old West" will again come alive in the Men's Gym. Free food, free drink, foot-stompin' music and good old fashioned hospitality will depict a scene similar to life in days past.

The theme for each year's ball is developed after the history of forestry in the Northwest, which is so much of our heritage in the American western movement. This year's theme is "Timber, Tracks, and Time," representing a segment from the era of the late 1800s-early 1900s when the railroads and logging of the West were becoming an important part of a growing nation.

Tickets for the event will be sold in the University Center and other outlets throughout Ball Week. Cost will be \$6 per couple.