

WHAT has become of all the pep and spirit in the crowd?" one Mizzou cheerleader has lamented. "There is a yell complex at Missouri football games — it seems that if a fellow yells for the team the people around him look at him with that curious expression as if asking, 'Who are you? Who are you? Who are you? Nobody yells here except the fools!'"

It is indeed a sad tale, and a very old one as well, for these comments appear in *Missouri Alumnus* back in December 1935. The article was written by Allen Oliver Jr., who was head cheerleader at a time when the stadium had never been filled to its (then) capacity of 26,000.

Today, the Tigers draw as many people to one football game as they drew during the entire 1935 season. And along with the numbers, the spirit seems to be rising also. While it may be premature to herald a revival of school spirit at Mizzou, it's clear that something is stirring.

"The interest seems to be building back up," says Brian Faison, the athletic department's assistant manager for public relations and promotions. "In the late '60s and early '70s the rah-rah syndrome was kind of looked down on. But I don't think that's true anymore. When we put on a rally last year, the kids were really turned on. They really got into it. And Homecoming, led by the Alumni Association's Student Board, is becoming more and more important."

Tiger mascot Debbie Durk has also noted this change. "The crowd's different now than it used to be," she says. "When my sister was at the University in the late 1960s, not that many people were involved. It seems now that kids are really getting into things."

THIS RENEWED INTEREST, however, is not simply a return to an earlier era, Faison explains. "School spirit is always school spirit, but it's interpreted in a little different fashion," he says. "The cheering styles have changed, for instance. They do a lot more gymnastic or acrobatic things now than they did, say, in the '40s or '50s. And back in the '40s and '50s they did more group cheering."

To Judy Patton and Joe Gaschen, co-captains of the cheerleading squad, this change seems one for the better. "Cheerleading has turned into something of an art," Gaschen says, explaining the pyramids, partner stunts and new gymnastic routines the squad is working on. "We're a creative team. We're not just there to lead a cheer."

"I think the name 'cheerleader' doesn't really apply anymore," Patton adds, "because we don't really lead the cheers." Fans often start their own cheers, she explains. There's an "unmentionable" cheer, for example, that is always heard at games against KU. "I don't know how they got started," Patton says with amazement. "But they always say it, and it's just carried down the stands."

"If you want to put it on a philosophical scale," Gaschen says, "the whole tone is more individual. It seems in the past there was a single attitude in the crowd, one prevail-



Saturday Afternoon Fever

By Margie Kelly

ing attitude. Now the crowds are more diverse.

"But you have your sections that cheer all the time," he continues. "We'll have a 'Let's Go Mizzou' cheer, and there'll be a section right in front of us — a fraternity maybe — that will be doing it like crazy. But just because the other sections aren't screaming at the top of their lungs doesn't mean they're not behind the team."

"I don't think spirit is an action or a sound of people yelling," Patton says thoughtfully. "That's just one form. Spirit is really just the energy of the crowd, just that feeling you get. And it's there. That's for sure."

At times, the cheerleaders have been able to harness that energy, getting one entire side of the stadium to shout

A victory at Notre Dame and the music of Mini-Mizzou ignited a festive celebration that jubilant Tiger fans did not want to end.



Mascots Debbie Durk and Chung Lee are usually found under their tiger heads.



The band playing, flags waving and the football team charging out onto the field help get the spirit boiling.

"M-I-Z" and the other side to respond "Z-O-U." "The first time it happened, it was magical almost," Gaschen says. "We couldn't believe it."

Like the cheerleaders, pom-pom girls are also working to improve themselves, say the tri-captains Karen Whitney, Ann Dussold and Debbie Sexe. The squad's success is well illustrated by their outstanding performance at cheerleading camp last summer. "We got two trophies and the award of excellence," Sexe says with enthusiasm. "We also got the spirit stick, which means we were the peppiest and the happiest."

"In other words," Dussold adds with a laugh, "we made fools out of ourselves."

To help maintain the spirit generated by their summer experience, the pom-pom squad began the year with virtually all new routines. And those routines incorporate the changes pom-pom styles have seen over the years. "It used to be that pom-pom was a thing strictly with pom-poms, and peppy," Whitney explains. "But with the new music we can't really do that anymore. So we've had to revise." Now their performances include what they call "jazz" — dance routines done with gloves on their hands, minus the pom-poms.

In yet another spirit organization — Marching Mizzou, or "MP" as they are sometimes called — changes are also being made. The new stadium addition is helping the band's sound, says director Alexander Pickard, and new bleachers are being worked on to relieve the crowding during football games.

BUT IN TERMS OF SPIRIT, Marching Mizzou needs no improvement. "In the 12 years I've been here," Pickard says, "we've been pretty consistently a high-spirit organization. The students have a lot of pride in the band. And I've always tried to instill in them that this is what we are; we're part of the spirit on this campus."

It is a modest assessment at best, for the band is not only a part of the campus spirit, but a source of it as well. Besides the well-known Golden Girls and Mini Mizzou, the band has in recent years spawned new offspring: the women's band and the popular Golden Guys, groups that perform at women's basketball games.

Within all the spirit groups on campus, energy seems to be running high. This is perhaps most evident from the adventures of the spirit bus that carries the different squads (financed substantially by the Alumni Association) to away games. "All on one bus," Durk says with a grin, "and the tuba goes in the bathroom."

With so much spirit concentrated in one place, it's not hard to predict the results. "Coming back from Illinois last year," Durk says, "we had a disco on the bus, and everybody was up in the aisles dancing." "It's like a little can of spirit," Patton says. "They open the door and all of a sudden — boom — there we are!"

A half-time show or rally isn't complete without the Golden Girls.

One place that "can of spirit" exploded this year was at the pep rally before the Alabama game. With sparklers, speeches, music and cheers of "Ride the Tide" and "Fire Up, MU, Fire Up," a crowd of about 600 students got a liberal dose of spirit-group energy. Considering the enthusiastic response the crowd gave, the mood seems to have been catching.

REMINISCENT OF DAYS GONE BY? No. They are actually a taste of things to come. Brian Faison says the Alabama rally was one of three planned for the football season, and one or two additional rallies may be held for basketball. That's almost as many rallies in one year as the school has seen in the last 10 years, Faison says.

To help in the planning of the rallies and other activities, a new student organization has been formed this year. It's called T.O.P.P.S. — Tiger Organization for Preparation and Promotion of Spirit. "It's designed to generate interest in Tiger athletics," Faison says, "not football, not basketball, but the whole ball of wax, from women's sports to baseball."

Among the new promotions being planned are a basketball spirit group called "FUAGNEM" — Fired Up And Going Nuts Every Minute — and an Adopt-A-Tiger program, where women in dorms and sorority houses will adopt a basketball player. "We're also building toward a card section next year for football," Faison says, "and we're going to call it the 'Thundering Thousand.'" The name was chosen, he explains, because — shades of the legendary Jesse Wrench — that was what the student body was called back in the 1920s and '30s.

Though the new days of school spirit at the University may look somewhat like the old days, Faison says, the renewal of interest is clearly more than a nostalgia trend.

"School spirit doesn't change," he says. "It's just the accoutrements — the cheers, the rallies, the promotions. But basically school spirit is the same no matter what the generation. Pride in the institution — whether it's on the playing field or in classroom — is the same: 'I'm from OI' Mizzou, and I'm proud.'" □



Acrobatics and gymnastics have been added to the cheerleaders' repertoire in recent years.



New routines may come and go, but pom-pons are a permanent fixture of this peppy squad.



Warren Powers addressed a spirited crowd at the T.O.P.P.S. rally before the Alabama game.

