



Fifty Years On Bonfire Hill: University Of New Hampshire's Student Memorial Union Building Celebrates Its Half-Century Anniversary

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It was after the war had ended, when the majority of University of New Hampshire students were former soldiers attending UNH on the GI bill, before the university got its first official student center.

The year was 1947 and the structure was an old USO building trucked in pieces from Ayer, Mass., and reassembled on Bonfire Hill, where students held pep rallies and celebrated sporting event wins.

The Notch, as it became known after then-UNH President Harold Stoke offered a \$25 prize to the person who came up with a new name for the center, had two offices where student organizations could meet, a snack bar, a lobby and a large function room.

Ten years later, on Oct. 12, 1957, during Homecoming, the brand new Student Memorial Building was dedicated. This month, the Memorial Union Building celebrates its 50th anniversary with a week long celebration, Oct., 15 – 19.

Ronald Gourley of Cambridge, Mass., was chosen over 12 other architects to design the four-story building that originally included a dining room, ballroom, several game and meeting rooms, a lounge and the War Memorial Room, dedicated to veterans.

Gourley's modernistic design featured a multicolored stained glass window that formed the entire southeast wall where the War Memorial Room is located. Fundraising had started out slowly years earlier. In 1955, the groundbreaking ceremony was held after a home football game and finally, in December 1958, the contemporary building was complete finished.

There have been two additions to the building, bringing it to its current 89,000-square feet: the Granite State Room was added some time in the 1960s and in 1995, the bookstore, theaters and lobby were built.

Fifty years later, the MUB is still the focal point for student activity. The anniversary celebration will include carnival events, a '70s musical revue, comedians, live music, a hypnotist and a week of movies through the decades.

For a list of activities go to www.unhmub.com/fiftieth.



