



University of Houston

Frontier Fiesta

April 19-24, 1954

Compiled and written by

Helen Gilpin

Johnny Goyen

Jack Valenti

"Greatest College Show On Earth"

Even in Texas, where superlatives are commonplace as cactus, this phrase has an air of bright validity. University of Houston's FRONTIER FIESTA, completely unlike any college enterprise in America, has captured the imagination and interest of Houstonians and Texans.

It is unique . . . Conceived, constructed, managed, directed and executed in its entirety by students -- more than 2,500 students participate in one phase or other of Fiesta.

It is big . . . 150,000 people poured through its front gates and visited its shows in its six-night stand in 1953.

It is profitable . . . \$98,700 was grossed with an estimated net profit of \$48,000 for the 1953 epic.

It is gaily Western . . . thirteen full-blossomed variety shows garbed and staged in the manner of the old Southwest, each with its own student orchestra, student cast, student chorus line . . . student-written, student-directed and produced, student-lighted, staged and managed.

It is traditional . . . in a young school with only a thin crust of forming tradition, Frontier Fiesta is THE BIG TRADITION on the campus. It was born in 1940, one year after the University moved to its new campus, and the 1953 spectacle was the ninth in an increasingly successful series of increasingly bigger Frontier Fiestas.

By any standard, it is truly the GREATEST COLLEGE SHOW ON EARTH.

WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES:

FRONTIER FIESTA is a six-night extravaganza of unbelievable fun. It consists of a western town -- Fiesta City, Texas -- built adjacent to the brightly-new air-conditioned buildings which comprise the University of Houston campus. The Frontier Fiesta Association, the all-student managing group of the enterprise, elects its own Fiesta chairman and his horde of assistants. Sororities, fraternities, and clubs each sponsor a show or a concession in the city. Construction, under supervision of students, is done by students who gather four months before the show opens to the sound of hammer, and saws and creaking backs . . . the shows go up.

Rehearsals begin. Student writers, singers, dancers, and directors start the endless hours of putting together a show. Mothers of students commence the designing and sewing and fittings that emerge in original costumes for the various casts.

Faculty members have only a remote part in the construction of this vast and colorful enterprise . . . they are "fringe censors" of the scripts . . . and they are available for consultation with the student managers, but in truth it must be stated theirs is only an enthusiastic but rarely performed role.

On the periphery of the midway itself are the contests, chief of which is the beard-growing contest which achieves immense interest not only on the campus but throughout the entire city. Various classifications of beards are judged, with the best all-around beard-grower receiving as first prize a brand-new Ford. Houston streets during Fiesta-time are thick with bearded faces.

And Fiesta has a purpose.

All profits from the production go to the ever-growing fund to build a student union building on the campus. First step toward this goal will be completed this summer with the construction of a swimming pool on the student union building site.



Construction goes forward...

months before the
show opens



1954 General Chairman of Frontier Fiesta
Don Webb, 21-year-old business major
from Houston. Thus, he directs a
\$100,000 enterprise.





Fiesta City

... a \$100,000 enterprise
and the curtain
goes up tonight !



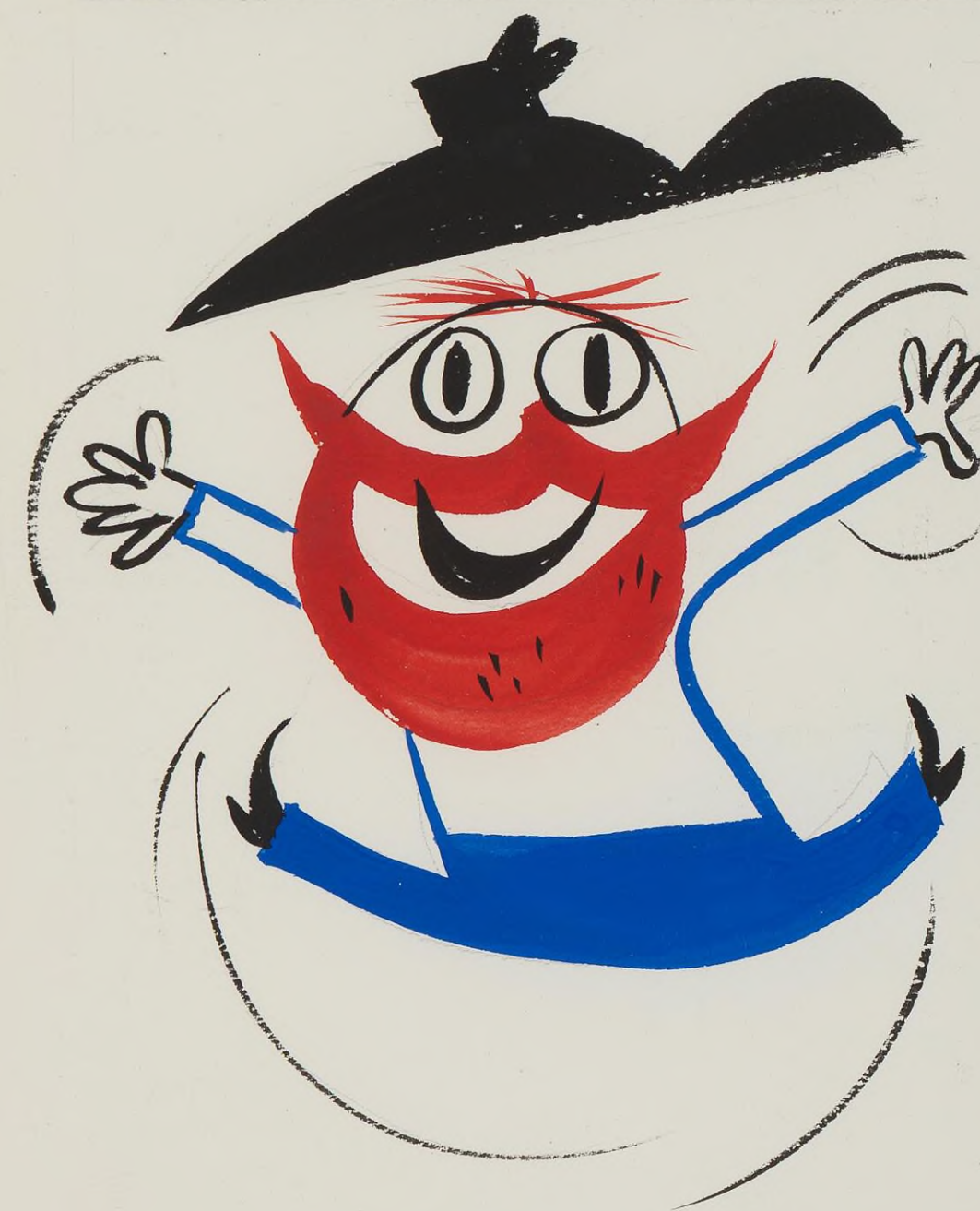
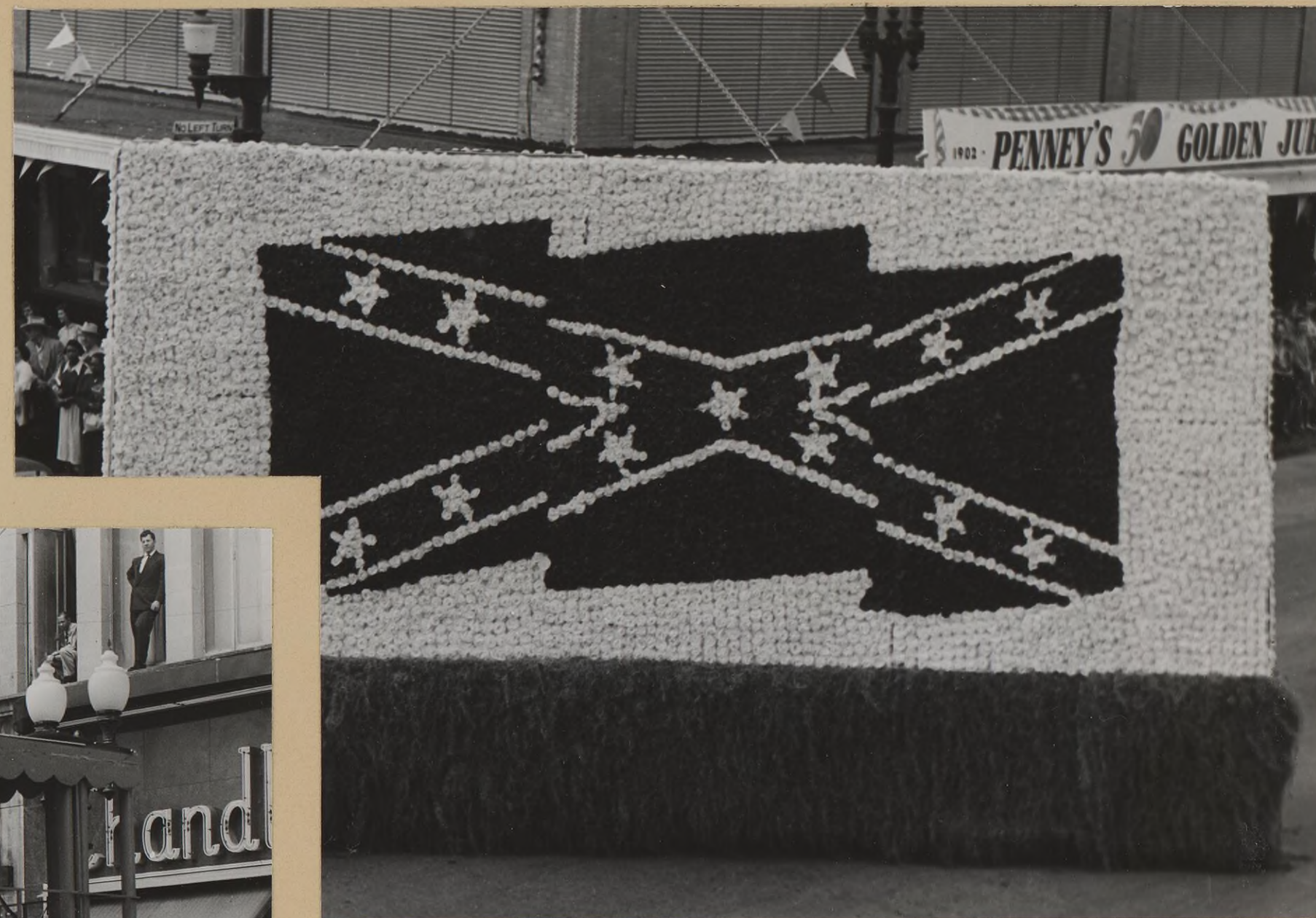
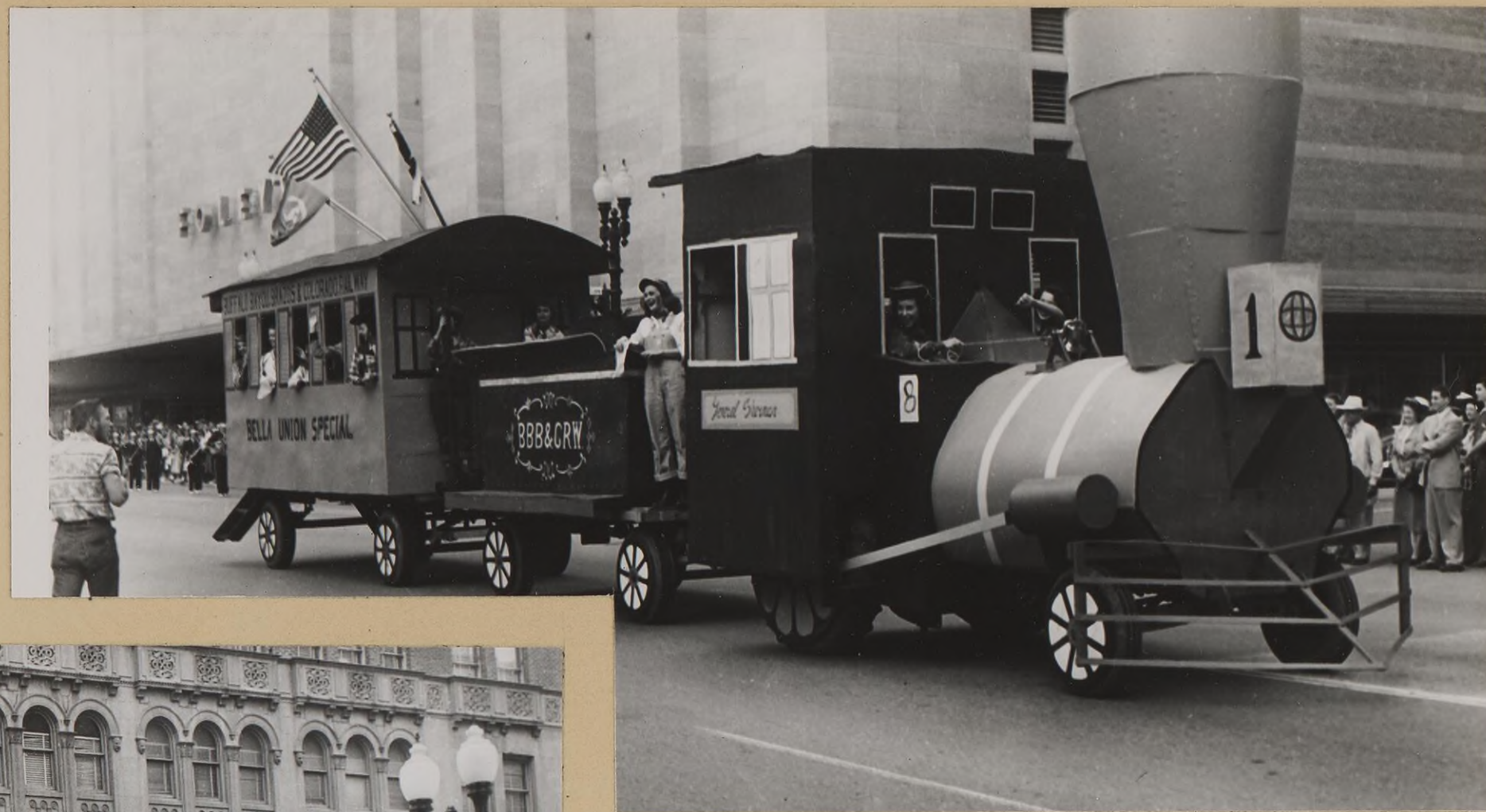




Fiesta over Main St.

...colorful and enthusiastic
parade heralds the opening
of FIESTA CITY





6 nights of western fun

...and 150,000 folks relax
and enjoy the Greatest
College Show On Earth!



The University's greatest benefactors, Mr. and Mrs.
Hugh Roy Cullen are first-night visitors.





Beautiful Girls...

the FIESTA'S (and Texas')
most priceless
natural resource







Broadway comes to HOUSTON...

dressed Western-Style!





Fiesta Forest...

the world's most unlikely,
but authentic, beards...

