

UW to Ring in New Carillon in the New Year!

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Those familiar with the campus know that each hour, from 8 AM to 6 PM (weekdays), the sound of "Westminster Chimes" fills the air, followed by the hour of day; and on special occasions such as Convocation and Graduation Day, traditional favorites are played by selected music students.

Chimes have a long history on the campus. In 1912, a water tower near the campus observatory was refurbished as a carillon tower, with an array of real bells donated by Col. Alden Blethen, then owner of The Seattle Times. A spectacular fire destroyed the tower and bells in 1949. Later that year, the bells were replaced by tuned metal rods manufactured by Schulmerich Carillons of Pennsylvania. The metal rods were struck by electromechanical strikers actuated by the clock or by a keyboard. Their sound was amplified, like an electric guitar, and sent through speakers. The clock, keyboard, and amplifiers have been located in the sub-basement of the Music Building. In recent years due to the system's age, there have been frequent failures, resulting in incorrect times being rung. In addition, the sound was becoming poorer. Recognizing that, despite its charm, the old system was becoming very difficult to repair and maintain, a way was sought to replace it.

Thanks to the President's Fund for Excellence, a new system was purchased from Van Bergen Bellfoundries in Charleston, South



"Assembling Blethen Chimes," 1912. Photo: Todd, UW Special Collections

Carolina, for \$15,000. It was decided early on that the cost and complexity of a traditional carillon with real bells was prohibitive. The new system is digital and computerized, and uses "sampled" (digitally recorded) sounds of real carillons which are played back through loudspeakers. A keyboard allows playing any melody. Songs can also be prerecorded on memory cards. The carillon will again ring the hours with the Westminster chimes. The entire system will be housed in a room at the top of Denny Hall.

SOM Director Robin McCabe said "We are very happy to get the new Van Bergen Carillon, and will revitalize an old campus tradition by having a student play it every morning." Krista-Dawn Jenner will be the first student carillonneur so honored during the winter quarter. McCabe, who used to play the old Carillon when she was a student at the UW, plans to play the new Carillon in a special inaugural concert for President William Gerberding, assisted by faculty colleague Carole Terry.

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