Muddzilla Video Captures MUDD HALL’s Demolition

IN 1998, Director of Multimedia Technology Darryl Barker had been employed at the law school for just over a year when he got an unusual request from then-Dean Dorsey D. Ellis, Jr.—videotape the demolition of Mudd Hall.

Barker was well aware of challenging conditions in Mudd Hall—his office had been “in a closet” on the third floor. “I remember the water running down the walls and some of the other problems that came with working or taking classes in Mudd Hall,” Barker recalls.

The resulting video—titled Muddzilla after the building’s name and the large, dinosaur-like equipment used to demolish it—quickly became popular within the law school community. So popular, in fact, that Barker made a “sequel,” Son of Muddzilla.

“People still remember how much they disliked Mudd Hall,” he says. “They enjoyed watching it come down.”

The two videotapes consist of about 15 minutes of footage showing “Muddzilla” chewing through massive concrete walls; gulping desks, chairs, and lighting fixtures; and gnashing through huge sheets of plate-glass.

The videos are largely unnarrated, but even today, narration is unnecessary. For many, watching them is cathartic. After several minutes, the images in Muddzilla become hypnotic and strangely beautiful. Working shirtless in the summer heat, the equipment operator conducts a ballet of destruction as “Muddzilla” wields to his bidding. Son of Muddzilla offers additional oddly fascinating footage of the building’s demolition.

“Mudd Hall did win an architectural award,” Barker recalls, and he admits to having liked some of the architecture of the 1960s and ’70s. Still, he adds, students, faculty, and staff were happy to move into the law school’s current home, Anheuser-Busch Hall.

View videos at: law.wustl.edu/MuddHall

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“During my third year, I asked the law school to paint the office I would occupy on the editorial board of the Law Quarterly. Answer, ‘No.’ I then asked if I could paint the walls. Answer, ‘No.’ The architect had a clause in the contract retaining control over interior decoration, I was told, so as to prevent anyone from destroying the aesthetic integrity of the building. I freely concede that such was my objective.”