

## On This Date In Saints History: July 1, 1967

By [Hans Petersen](#) on Jul 1, 6:00a

Welcome to July, [Saints](#) fans. Hot enough for you? Egg, meet sidewalk, meet cliché. If you can't stand the heat, get out of this feature story.

Today's installment highlights another first in team history, the first-ever Saints training camp that opened 45 years ago today in San Diego (a site they would use for three years), and it was for rookies only (veterans showed up on July 10):

July 1 - Rookies report for 1st training camp at San Diego's Cal Western.

Ooooooh, a camp in sunny San Diego - sounds like fun in the sun. We'll see about that, after the jump.

But according to Wayne Mack's **Saga of the Saints**, it really wasn't fun at all (emphasis added):

On July 1 rookies and quarterbacks reported, and what was dubbed as (Tom) Fears' "concentration camp" opened in San Diego on the Cal Western campus. **Veterans described it as the toughest camp they had ever attended.**

Mack also noted the following...

(owner John) Mecom took up residence nearby at the plush, private Kona Kai Club on beautiful Point Loma. In this convivial atmosphere, many important decisions concerning the Saints were made by a coterie of lackeys, casual drop-ins and occasionally maybe even someone who knew something about football.

...as well as:

Players arrived and departed almost daily as the coach signed the healthy, the halt and the maim, young and old, rookie and veteran to his "concentration camp."

..and...

While the booze flowed at the Kona Kai, the sweat poured at Cal Western. Two scrimmages against San Diego in which the AFL Chargers were punished severely by the NFL's newest entry, convinced the players, the owners and reporters that the future was bright indeed. On July 29, after many tests and evaluations in hospitals from Houston and Minnesota to California, hope surrendered to reality when (star expansion draftee Paul) Hornung announced that his career was over. Doctors decided he could suffer serious nerve damage if he played

football again. So his contract would be with WWL-TV as a special Saints reporter on the 6 o'clock news.

Mike Detillier wrote about the first training camp and quoted Buddy D in this article from 2008, [Looking Back at the Birth of the Saints](#):

The Saints had their first training camp at Cal-Western University in San Diego, and it was Diliberto's first look at the upstart NFL team.

"The site of the training camp couldn't have been more perfect to cover a team," Diliberto said. "We were right off the Pacific Ocean, and while it was hot, it cooled off during the night and there was always a breeze blowing to ease the heat. It was a really brutal training camp. Head coach Tom Fears really put these guys through some tough practices, but as hard as they practiced on the field, they partied off the field. All the players and media ended up at the Kona Kai Club in Point Loma and it was like a nightly fraternity party. To say they had fun nightly was an understatement. The leader of the pack was Paul Hornung, but it was Doug Atkins who really made things interesting back then."

In that article, Buddy also shared this training camp story about wild DE Doug Atkins:

"During the training camp in San Diego, some of the rookies were playing music a little too loud for Doug, and he tried to get them to turn the music down. They didn't respond to him, so Doug aimed an old shotgun he had and shot threw (sic) the floor. The players that were above him told me it sounded like a cannon went off and he had everyone scattering down the hall. Needless to say there was no more noise that night and no one else roomed above Atkins the rest of camp. Atkins is the one player the Saints had back then I wished I could see today in his prime," Diliberto said.

And from the **Where Are They Now? File**, the school and campus of that original training camp have gone through some changes since then ([source](#)):

This site is for all of us to remember our time at Cal Western and USIU. This is your site so send me ideas and material and I will add them to the pages. I need photos, rosters, etc.

USIU is the descendant of the original Balboa School of Law founded by Leland Ghent Stanford as a private graduate institution in 1924. The name was changed to Balboa University, and then to California Western University in 1952. CWU is founded at site of Tingley's Theosophical Society on Point Loma. Once again, in 1968, the school's name was changed to United States International University. The law school, however, retained the name of California Western School of Law.

The only thing I found on that site about the Saints training camp was a link to a pdf of a portion of that Detillier article I already linked to above, although there is some equal opportunity classic Cal Western beefcake cheerleader photography [here](#).

And in closing, the Times-Pic had a couple of 1967 training camp photos in a gallery - [here](#) and [here](#).

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That's all I've got on this for now, but I'm hoping those who were around from the early days will share anything they remember from the first Saints training camp. Can you imagine what the Fleur-de-Links from the first day of camp looked like? Ha! I bet it was full of links to Buddy D, Pete Finney, and Bob Roesler stories like you wouldn't believe!!