Do you recognize this float?

University Communications
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Anyone who has packed up their home in preparation for a move has probably uncovered some interesting things – a gift card with $50 on it, a tablet that slipped behind some furniture or a favorite concert T-shirt from high school.

For Parking & Transportation Services, the discovery was a bit bigger: An object that appears to be a wooden parade float more than 30 feet long.

PTS is preparing to move its transit operations from an off-campus location at 315 S. Plumer Ave. to a University-owned building at the corner of Fremont Avenue and Sixth Street. The Plumer location houses the University's fleet of Cat Tran shuttles and has a park-and-ride lot where people can rent parking spaces. In a storage area near that lot sat a large item covered with blue fabric that no one had touched for more than five years.

"Nobody ever thought to uncover it and see what it is," said Araceli Gonzalez, transit operations manager with Parking & Transportation Services. "We assumed the owner knew what it was, so we worked around it."

But Parking & Transportation Services has decided not to renew the lease on the property, so everything has to go. When the cover was removed, Gonzalez found a large float – which she estimates to be 30-40 feet long – that is modeled after the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor.

"It's been sitting there for some time," Gonzalez said. "The tires are flat since they've been sitting there for several years. The wood is starting to deteriorate, but it is holding up."

Sitting atop a blue platform that has "USS Arizona Memorial" painted across it, the float depicts the white bridge that was built above the resting place of the 1,102 sailors and Marines who were killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

It's not surprising that the USS Arizona would inspire a University float. Campus reminders of the battleship include the USS Arizona memorial on the Mall, which opened in 2016. It comprises a full-scale outline of the iconic ship's deck and brass medallions with the names of those who lost their lives in the attack. Inside the Student Union Memorial Center stands a tower that holds a bell once housed in the ship. The bell was discovered by alumnus Bill Bowers in 1944 and arrived on campus in 1946. The USS Arizona Lounge inside the Union showcases items related to the ship gifted to the University. Other items can be found at University Libraries Special Collections.

Nothing on the float indicates its owner.

"This is the first time we've run into something like this," Gonzalez said. "Every vehicle that we have here has a permit that is tied to the unit so we can notify them. With this one, we can't find an owner, a plate, a tag – nothing."

Gonzalez says the float has been in the storage area since at least 2018, before she and the executive director of PTS, Jim Sayre, started working there. They are reaching out to campus in hopes of finding an owner. The team is set to move to the new building in June and, Gonzalez says, if an owner hasn't been found by then, they will look for temporary storage.

Anyone with information about the float is asked to contact Gonzalez at 520-621-2550 or araceligonzalez@arizona.edu.

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