

This "inside man" is a part time mascot

by Virgil Petty

as told to Carol Wells

Technical Journalism Sophomore

Can a gaudy, inanimate mascot arouse a college crowd? Now, a year after Iowa State's own "Cy" was born, a report from the "man within" reassures us . . .



"I THINK CY was a big factor in boosting the spirit of the students of Iowa State. He had a double effect. It gave the guys that were participating in the events a lift to know that people thought enough of them to create a mascot such as Cy. And second, it got more school spirit out of the fans, and that is a terrific thing to the guys who are trying to do their best. I think that last year there was much more spirit shown than in my previous two years at college."

Virgil Petty, the human part of Cy, has been watching the student body perk up to this 8½ feet man-made cardinal mascot. The cardinal, a startling two-week, one-man creation was 1954's Homecoming experimental surprise.

Eyecatching plush and felt body with gold sheepskin boots (a total of 25 pounds with aluminum frame) is quite a costume for the wearer and a "real load."

Has comfort problems

Virg, now a senior, says, "Cy is a well built bird, and a well insulated one too. On the days of fairly warm weather I wear a short sleeved shirt and jeans, and really get hot. On the colder days I can wear a sweater and jeans and be very comfortable when the fans are huddled under scarves, coats, and blankets.

"Cy does get heavy, especially on the warmer days. As there are no openings except for the bottom and the little peek window, it does get rather stuffy in there but it hardly bothers my breathing."

Referring to the peek window again, (a long and narrow slit 1 inch by 12 inches beneath the bird's beak). Virg claims he can't see for about 5 feet forward and below the bird's neck. This is why you may see him taking it easy when going over curbs or nearing other obstacles.

"I'm sure that if I ever fell down I could never make it back up without someone's help. That is unless I crawled out and started over again."

Virg has a perfect chance to observe not only mass reactions to a mascot but to become interested also in the comments from individuals. The larger children



Virgil Petty, the man within Cy

are the ones that are completely astonished by Cy. They question whether or not the thing is really alive. I'd like to have a camera and catch some of their expressions. It seems to thrill them when I take their hands and walk along with them."

Of the adults, women are most curious and impressed with the bird. Most all within hearing range of Virg comment on how pretty Cy is.

"The men, as usual, don't say much!"

Realizing that being Cy is a big responsibility, Virg confesses, "One of my main faults inside the bird is that I get so interested in the football game or whatever it might be that I forget to move, and this blocks the view of people sitting in the lower seats."

Virg played football, baseball, basketball and ran in track in high school. He was on the varsity basketball squad his sophomore year at Iowa State, so he is keenly interested in sports. "However, I try not to stay in one place too long, even if Iowa State is on a touchdown drive."

Iowa State students can be indebted to George Grooms, the Ames artist who designed Cy on short order and did all the sewing by hand. He also designed the Kansas University Jayhawk.

The man that's closest to Cy, the man within, agrees new coaches, new teams all give reason for renewed spirit, and when Cy struts to the football games this fall, student enthusiasm goes right along with him.

usually call Cy a rooster or chicken and get a charge from calling out "Hey Chicken, can you lay any eggs?" They'd like Cy to do anything from crowing, to flying atop a flag pole and sitting there.

"I might try to crow, but no flag pole for me!" says Virg. "The kids that are about ready to start school

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