

MSU INFORMATION

SPARTY (Emblem & mascot)

HAPPY NEW YEAR



*Dashing through the snow
Wearing green and white all day
O'er Munn Field we go
Laughing all the way!
Bells of Beaumont ring
Making spirits bright
What fun it is to laugh and sing
A Spartan song tonight!*



Warmest greetings & best wishes for the new year!
GO GREEN!

Happy Holidays from Sparty
and the Student Alumni Foundation

*S*PARTY^{#1}



Purchase Sparty's 2013 Calendar, available early January on shop.msu.edu

I Remember SPARTY

By Bruce Kefgen

There is nothing like a college football Saturday in Michigan, especially at my alma mater, Michigan State University. The pageantry of those days on the East Lansing campus is something I will never forget.

I had the opportunity to experience that pageantry from a perspective few people know. In 1969 and 1970, it was my great honor to represent M.S.U. and my fraternity as the school's mascot, Sparty. Today's college mascots wear elaborate and expensive costumes. But, in the period between 1950 and 1970, mascots wore simple outfits when they joined the cheerleaders on the sidelines. Some of these simpler mascots still exist today, though they are few in number. At Michigan State, Sparty has become such a symbol of the university that his outfit has evolved into a three-dimensional, muscle-bound character with a delightful but tough expression that is widely known throughout the country. "He" has even won national mascot contests.

When I was in college, Sparty was a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity who wore an oversized Fiberglas head on his shoulders over a costume consisting of a white sweater and pants. The outfit was more in keeping with the cheerleaders' attire than that of an ancient Greek soldier.

The young men chosen to be Sparty were selected at the beginning of the school year after undergoing an audition of sorts. Because of the size and weight of the head, not everyone who wanted to serve in this capacity could qualify. Having strong legs and a broad upper torso became important factors, because the base of the head sat directly on





Photos on opposite page and above courtesy of the author. Stadium photo courtesy of Michigan State University Archives.



the wearer's shoulders and was secured in place by canvas straps resembling the harness of a World War II-era parachute.

The biggest challenge of being Sparty in those days was moving about while keeping my balance. The head weighed about 65 pounds and was more than five feet high and almost four feet wide. When perched on my shoulders, it felt like a giant sail that would catch whatever wind was blowing on game day and try to push me over. The head also made running onto the football field an interesting experience, knowing that the entire football team was thundering out right behind and if I tripped I would likely be trampled.

The Sparty head I wore was hollow inside. When the Fight Song and Alma Mater were played, I would sing along with the band in my very own echo chamber.

I navigated my way around the field by looking through a small slit in the head's mouth. The perspective I had was very limited—like looking out a submarine periscope. I could not see what was behind me or at my side. That made bumping into things a constant concern. I once ran into part of the goal post and ended up on my back in the end zone. Fortunately, some of my fraternity brothers were there to rescue me.

Due to the head's height, it was necessary to take it off and set it in a corner of the end zone so as not to block

anyone's view of the game. At halftime, though, I would put the head back on and parade around the perimeter of the stadium, waving to fans and having my picture taken with children. I would also engage in a playful tussle with the other school's mascot. The Golden Gopher from the University of Minnesota was a particularly good sport about doing this, as was the mascot from Purdue University known as Purdue Pete. At the end of the game, I would exit the stadium through the tunnel to meet and greet alumni and have more photographs taken with anyone who was interested.

Although the fraternity didn't "market" Sparty, I was occasionally asked to attend parades or special events. One time, a little boy saw me in a parade and shouted, "Hi, big head." The fellows who accompanied me, and kept

me from falling out of the back of the convertible we were riding in, quickly said to the little boy, "His real name is Sparty." The child, who was probably of kindergarten age, didn't quite catch what my fraternity brothers were saying. So he cheerfully replied:

"Hi, Marty!" From then on, I was referred to by my new moniker.

Sadly, after I graduated, the Sig Eps experienced a decline in membership and Fiberglas Sparty became more of a decoration and memento of a bygone era than a football icon. In 1989, the university introduced a new Sparty mascot—the one still in use in East Lansing today.

Not long ago, I had the opportunity to see my old friend one more time. With the help of the staff of the M.S.U. Museum, I found the Sparty head I wore lovingly housed in the museum's storage facilities along with hundreds of other items of Michigan State memorabilia. He looked a bit tattered and worn, but—in my eyes—still capable of fostering spirit in the university's students, building pride among its alumni, and bringing joy to the faces of countless children.

Bruce Kefgen graduated from Michigan State in 1971. He recently retired after serving for 39 years as a teacher, coach, and school administrator. He and his wife Judy reside in Algonac.

to '60s, and graduated from its high school in 1971. Those of us in the junior high band could not wait until we were allowed to ride down the Flat River on the showboat, tooting out "Here Comes the Showboat" while the engines groaned around Cattail Bend. What a ride!

Crista Simmons
Richland

EXPLORING WHITE RIVER

The interview with Frances Marshall in the May/June 2010 issue of *Michigan History* tells about Marshall's experiences as a lighthouse keeper at White River.

During our pleasure boating cruises, we had never visited White River or Lake. The published article awakened our curiosity to further explore Great Lakes Cruising Club Report M-21 on this light station. The report revealed much history about the river, the lake, the lighthouse, and the area's first discovery.

The report described early French explorers mapping and napping at White Lake during the year 1675. Mapping was one of the responsibilities of Jesuit priests, as they had the education and intellect to write journals and draw maps. The report's pages, written by Kenneth G. Smith, gave us a feel of the way it was done at the time of exploration.

Paul Theriault
Petoskey

REMEMBERING SWIFT LATHERS

It was a nice surprise to find Swift Lathers featured in the July/August 2010 issue. Living near Mears, I remember giving rides to the editor as he walked the byways gathering news in the 1960s. I didn't supply him with much fodder, as I was wary of being used as a source for one of his mischievous articles. His style delighted

some, but vexed others.

Years later, I am now one of the volunteer docents in Swift's museum-home. As I reread his newspapers, I appreciate what a valuable historical resource he left us and, yes, I am amused just as he intended.

Those interested in seeing if—or what—Swift wrote about them can search through online archives of the *Mears Newz* at www.oceanahistory.org.

Esther Moul
Hart

A 1980s SPARTY RESPONDS

Shortly after reading the article titled "I Remember Sparty" (September/October 2010), my wife came running into our family room announcing, "Look, there's an article about you in this edition of *Michigan History*!" Of course, the article was not about me, but rather reminded her of my time as Sparty during my college days at Michigan State University.

I thought it might be helpful to bridge the gap between when Bruce Kefgen ended his wonderful article and the current state of Sparty the mascot. I too was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon during the 1980s and was honored to be one of three Spartys during the M.S.U. football seasons of 1984 and 1985.

We used the head pictured in Bruce's article up until the fall of 1984. In that year, the Sig Eps redesigned and resculpted the head to present a meaner-looking face as well as to make the head lighter and easier to wear. We Spartys would enter the stadium wearing a football uniform consisting of shoulder pads, jersey, and pants and circle the field on a chariot towed by a large Fiberglas football covering a riding lawnmower tractor. The creator and operator of the football tractor was Dr. Bigelow, an alumnus and retired veterinarian.

Before games, I remember being carried around and among tailgaters in the back of a pickup truck with my fraternity brothers. Fans at the tailgate

parties would gather around to get a picture with Sparty, even giving us money (which we used for gas for the truck) and free food. I have many fond memories of those days, including the time when the University of Michigan Sig Ep chapter raided our house and kidnapped the Sparty head. We road-tripped to Ann Arbor to retrieve it, where we found it hanging out of a window at the chapter house with its face painted half maize and half blue.

Those were truly great times. Business associates and partners of mine love to tell everyone they meet that I was once the M.S.U. mascot. However, the greatest joy I get from the experience is seeing the tradition live on. This is especially true when my family attends an M.S.U. football game, and I watch my 13- and 9-year-old daughters run up to Sparty to get a picture and proudly say, "My daddy was Sparty once."

Todd Pickard
Birmingham, AL

CORRECTION

July/August 2010

"Nelson & Eliza Truckey: A Civil War Saga": The lighthouse that Mrs. H. Lubuck served at from 1862 to 1865 was Grand Island North.



LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

We welcome your comments, questions, and concerns and will print your communications as space permits. Write us at Editor, *Michigan History Magazine*, 5815 Executive Drive, Lansing, MI 48911 or e-mail mhmeditor@hsmichigan.org.

Michigan History Magazine

New Sparty statue debuting this fall



RJ Wolcott, Lansing State Journal 6:03 a.m. EST January 21, 2016



(Photo: Alison Brown / Courtesy)

EAST LANSING - A new bronze monument to Michigan State University's Sparty mascot is scheduled to debut inside the MSU Union in time for homecoming this fall.

Perched on a bench with his muscular arms extend out welcomingly, the new Sparty will be accompanied by a display highlighting the MSU mascot's evolution, said Tami Kuhn, MSU Union manager.

The new installation will also include a full list of donors who contributed toward the \$150,000 project as well as an explanation of Oregon-based sculptor Alison Brown's (<http://www.campussculptures.com/>) design process. Sparty will have room on either side of him for people to pose with and will be cast in bronze and adorned with classic MSU green and white, Brown said. Money raised will go toward the statue and accompanying displays as well as maintenance costs. A small portion will also be awarded to the Sparty Mascot program, Kuhn said.

Close to \$60,000 dollars has been raised for the project so far, she said, including an anonymous \$50,000 donation. The MSU Senior Class Council also picked the Bronze Sparty Statue Fund as its senior class gift (<http://givingto.msu.edu/senior-gift.cfm>), an annual fundraiser for special campus projects.

It was a visit to Ohio State's union eight years ago that ironically inspired the idea for the new Sparty statue.

"We saw a monument to Brutus, Ohio State University's mascot when we toured their brand new union and thought we could do the exact same thing for Sparty, the best mascot in the Big Ten," Kuhn said. Union staff began talking about getting a Sparty statue inside the MSU Union six years ago, which found traction last year thanks in part to interest from the Senior Class Council.

"I thought this would be a great opportunity to get more people inside the Union," said Marc Reed, an MSU senior who heard about the idea as a student representative on the MSU Union Advisory Board. The MSU Union is a gathering point for students looking for food or a place to study and contains a number of popular destinations including an MSU Dairy Store location as well as the Spartan Spirit Shop.

The new mascot display will add an extra attraction for prospective students and families, who currently flock to the Spartan statue on campus for photos. It will also be something this year's graduating seniors can leave behind for future Spartans to enjoy.

Union officials reached out to Brown last year after selecting her from among a cluster of half a dozen proposals, Kuhn said. Brown visited campus last

year and talked to students and staff about what Sparty meant to them.



"Work ethic was something everyone talked about and it was a core value that I am inspired by as well," the Oregon University graduate said. While she'll always don green and yellow at games, Brown said her new connection with MSU means she'll likely have to incorporate some green and white into her wardrobe.

Concept art for the new Sparty statue set to debut inside the MSU Union this fall. (Photo: Alison Brown / Courtesy)

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How you can contribute

To donate to the Bronze Sparty Statue Fund, visit givingto.msu.edu/ (<http://givingto.msu.edu/>) and select the give now button. Prospective donors can then type Bronze Sparty into the search box to give directly to the project.

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Concept art for the new Sparty statue set to debut inside the MSU Union this fall. (Photo: Alison Brown / Courtesy)

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New Sparty Statue revealed at the Union



The bronze Sparty monument, pictured here on Oct. 12, 2016 in the Union, was created by sculptor Alison Brown, who created a clay rendering used to cast the 1,500-pound statue.

Derek VanHorn | The State News

By Madison O'Connor
October 12, 2016 6:15 pm



The new bronze Sparty statue was revealed at the Union on Wednesday. The project has been in the works since 2010 and was started in 2015. After a year of work on the statue, it was finally revealed.

The bronze Sparty unveiling involved program speakers, Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations Scott Westerman, sculptor Alison Brown, April Clobes from the MSU Federal Credit Union, Vice President of Auxiliary Enterprises Vennie Gore and President Lou Anna K. Simon. Sparty himself also made an appearance.



Madison O'Connor
@madison_o22

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President Lou Anna K. Simon speaks at the statue unveil
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4:14 PM - 12 Oct 2016

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"I think when you see him, you will be amazed at how much he looks like the real Sparty and I know when I saw him, I just expected him to get up off the bench and walk away," Union Director Tami Kuhn said. "But I think it's a really great opportunity for people to reach out and touch Sparty and connect with him."



Madison O'Connor
@madison_o22

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Sculptor Alison Brown and Sparty pose with the new statue
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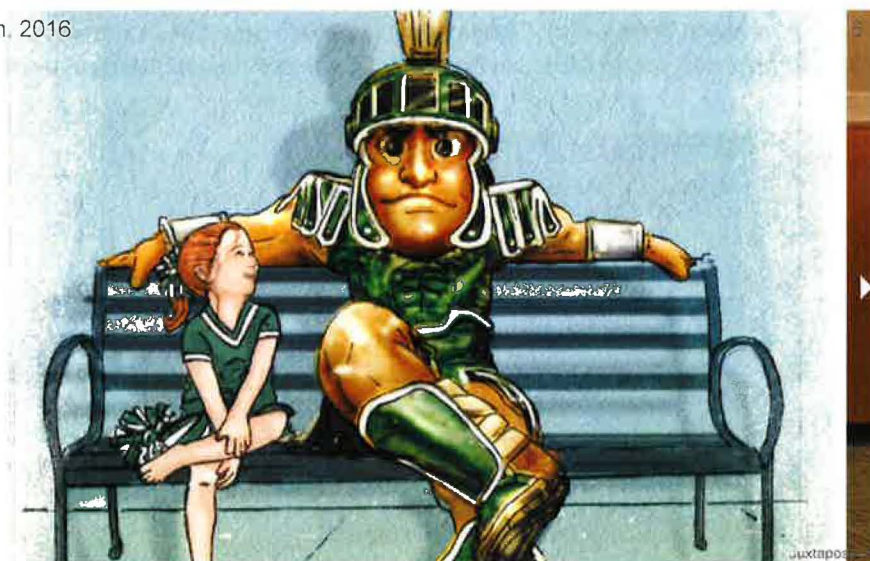
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Bringing the statue into the Union required 12 people, Union Associate Director Doug Murdoch said. The sculpture weighs approximately 1,500 pounds.

"Because of the size, it would not come in through the normal loading dock or the hallways of the building because it's such an old building, so it had to be carried in through the entrance doors and up the stairs," Murdoch said.

Jan. 2016



The idea behind the Sparty sculpture started with a conversation in the Union Advisory Board, Kuhn said. It was created as a project to enhance the Union.

"We started thinking about this in 2010, and finally in 2015, decided it wasn't going to happen unless we decided to make it so," she said. "We requested proposals from various bronze artists and those were sent in and then reviewed by the committee, and Alison Brown was elected. Hers was by far the best proposal and, I believe, ultimately the very best choice for the project."

Brown, 27, hails from Oregon and has been sculpting for five years. In her time as a sculptor, she has created mascot sculptures for the University of Oregon, the University of Southern California, Oregon State and Boise State University.

"The casting process is exactly the same each time, the sculpting process, I mean, that can be way different," Brown said. "It's technically the same, but, like, the inspiration, the story, everything else is a totally, totally different experience for each piece because it's got a different foundation behind it, so that's what keeps it fun."

Before creating the sculpture, Brown visited MSU to collect reference material. She measured Sparty and took photos before returning to Oregon to work on him, she said. Now a year later, the statue is done.



Madison O'Connor
@madison_o22

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Sculptor Alison Brown speaks about the new bronze Sparty statue [@thesnews](#)

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"There's a whimsy to Sparty, but there's a real strength behind it," she said. "And I just thought that it was so cool – that can tell the story of so many different stories and so many other accomplishments that people have done based on that drive and that grit. That was really inspiring to me. That is what I hope to capture in the sculpture."

Now that the statue has been unveiled, people will be able to take pictures with Sparty at any time. Kuhn said she hopes the sculpture will have a positive impact on the community.

"I'm just really proud that this is finally come to fruition and so proud of all the people who worked really hard on this project," Kuhn said. "It's a good day to be in the Union."

The statue is a gift from the class of 2016.

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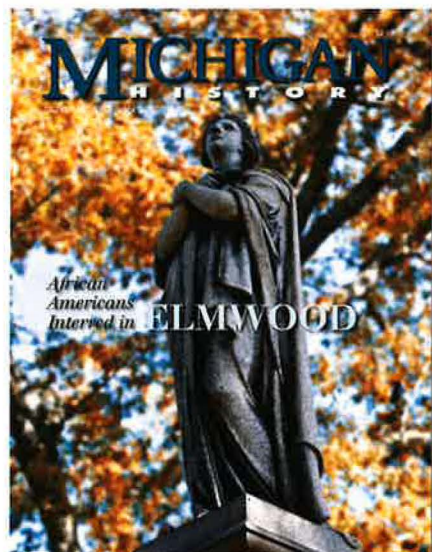
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HIGH-TOP LEATHER BOOTS

The Christmas boots story by Virginia Law Burns in your last issue brought back fond memories of my childhood. For 12 years, my dad—Harry Teysen—was the manager of a businessmen's club in mid-Michigan known as the Saginaw Club. He also suffered from hay fever and asthma and could find relief only in the pure air of the Mackinac area. To make him more comfortable, our family spent the summers in Mackinaw City where we established a small seasonal restaurant. Every October, we would return to Saginaw so he could resume management of the club.

For a period of five years, I began elementary school here and then transferred to the North Intermediate Elementary School in Saginaw. Anticipating winter in the Straits with its deep snow, most boys wore a pair of high-top leather boots. A jackknife secure in its snap-top pocket on the right-hand boot was an absolute must. So was applying waterproofing bear grease to the boots on a nightly basis. By spring, they were nearly as soft and pliable as kid gloves.

On our return to Saginaw, I wore my boots into the fifth-grade classroom. No kids there had seen such boots before and delighted in ridiculing them and the kid wearing them. Then, one

letters to the editor |

"A jackknife secure in its snap-top pocket on the right-hand boot was an absolute must. So was applying waterproofing bear grease to the boots on a nightly basis."

—Ken Teysen

day, a classmate showed up with the same boots. Suddenly, it became the "in" thing and nearly every boy ended up with a pair. The best source for them was the R&H Shoe Store near the Home Dairy in downtown Saginaw.

Finally, I was accepted by the city kids because of my accidental role as a trendsetter. The lack of deep snow in Saginaw seemed to have no bearing on the desire to own such a unique kind of footwear.

Ken Teysen
Mackinaw City

SPARTY IN THE 1950s

I enjoyed reading Bruce Kefgen's delightful piece in the September/October issue about being Michigan State University's "Sparty." In the fall of 1955, I was Spartan Spirit commissioner and president of the M.S.U. Band. The first Sparty head had been made of papier-mache by members of Theta XI fraternity in late 1954 or early 1955, and was stored in the fraternity house's basement during the following spring and summer. By the time the 1955 football season rolled around, the 6-foot-high, 60-pound head had absorbed so much moisture that it was impossible to carry—even though the carrier, Bill Clithero, was 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighed 200

pounds. A second papier-mache head was hastily constructed for the 1955 football season, which turned out to be a winning one for my alma mater. In January 1956, a new Fiberglas Sparty head accompanied the band to the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, where Michigan State beat U.C.L.A. by a score of 17-14.

Donald Gillette
Tampa, FL

A GENEALOGIST RESPONDS

I have just finished reading the July/August edition of *Michigan History*. Your interview with Randy Riley, who is employed at the Library of Michigan in the genealogy department, was great. I hope your questions and his answers can serve some purpose in educating non-genealogists about the dire straits our wonderful state library is in, and what the executive branch has suggested be done with the genealogy collection.

Riley's response to the question of how patrons feel about the library turmoil—that "they're pretty upset"—is a mild assessment of genealogists' feelings. We are greatly upset at the possibility that the library might have to dismantle the genealogy collection and close its doors. If it were reopened at some time in the future, it would never be the same.

Readers interested in the plight of the Library of Michigan should contact their legislators and express their thoughts. We genealogists need some outside support.

Joanne Brines
Midland

was appointed superintendent of the poor in Gratiot County in October 1904. Additionally, as I turned the page to continue reading the article, I was surprised to see a copy of the book "Farm Ballads" by Will Carleton. I have an edition of that same book only with a red cover. A handwritten inscription on the inside reads, "To Clara F. Hughes Merry Christmas 1890 from John." Clara and John Hughes were my great-grandparents. This article has given my heirloom new meaning!

Cynthia Hughes DeFore
Comins

POORHOUSE CONNECTION

In the November/December issue, I especially enjoyed reading the article titled "The House That Inspired a Poem That Moved a Nation to Tears" regarding the Hillsdale County Poorhouse. My great-great-uncle, Richard E. Hughes,

CORRECTIONS

September/October 2010

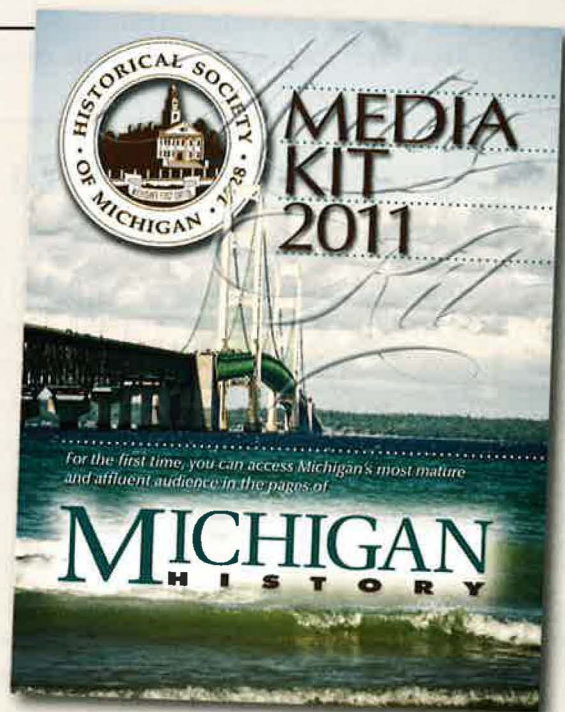
"When Cuba Came to Marquette": The building depicted in the background of the photo on page 52 was St. Paul's High School in Munising.

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MICHIGAN HISTORY



Muscle-bound for the top

Sparty crushes competition to win 'Buffest Mascot on Campus' title

By **SONIA GODAMBE**

State News Staff Writer

Sparty has recently been named the "Buffest Mascot on Campus" in a special edition of Muscle & Fitness magazine. Sparty was among mascots from 100 universities around the country that were judged.



The State News • **CAROLYN FELDMAN**

Spartan fans: It's now official.

Based on size, strength and reputation for machismo, Sparty is the most ripped university mascot in the country.

Sparty — MSU's muscle-bound mascot — beat out mascots from 100 universities to be named the "Buffest Mascot on Campus" in a college issue of Muscle & Fitness magazine that hits newsstands today.

"College mascots are what people are most proud of," said Bill Geiger, the magazine's editor. "We decided to put them head-to-head to see who comes out on top. Michigan State came out on top."

The news came as little surprise to some Spartans.

"Sparty is known nationwide for being one of the biggest and best mascots," said Mike Bakker, co-director of the mascot program run by the Student Alumni Foundation.

"Sparty is feared by other mascots."

Sparty's dominating figure got the attention of a panel of editors from Muscle & Fitness, which judged the competition.

"The guy is ready for a body-building competition," Geiger said. "He's ripped to shreds. We're kind of a body-building magazine and that puts him far and away No. 1. He's a caricature of a professional body builder."

Bakker said Sparty's strengths go beyond his chiseled physique.

"If they're going by being buff, Sparty goes back to ancient times in warring states," he said. "Sparty is many times defined as a warrior, and he's head-and-shoulders bigger and wider. He's got this stone-cold face that says, 'Don't mess with me.'"

Purdue University's Purdue Pete finished second to Sparty in the competition. But Purdue officials say Purdue Pete is really a campus icon — not the official mascot. That honor goes to the Boilermaker Special.

The Boilermaker Special is an

almost 24-foot-long, 9-foot-tall, 5 1/2-ton train. But Purdue officials say the Boilermaker Special should have won anyway.

"It should have been first because it is the biggest and most unique mascot," said Bryan Schaffer, a member of Purdue University's student-run Reamer Club, the Boilermaker Special's official caretaker.

"It is the world's largest collegiate mascot and actually powers itself to games," Schaffer said. "No other Big Ten mascot does that."

Another Big Ten mascot also got the nod but topped the other side of the list.

Bucky the Badger, University of Wisconsin at Madison's official mascot, was named "Weakest Mascot on Campus." Bucky was given the "Badger of Dishonor" and was compared to a Tickle Me Elmo doll.

Other mascots that finished in the magazine's top eight include the University of Georgia at Athens' bulldog; the University of Florida at Gainesville's gator; and the University of Montana at Missoula's Grizzly.

Godambe, State News health and religion reporter, can be reached at godambes@pilot.msu.edu.

State News Feb. 16, 1999



MEET SPARTY

OUR CELEBRITY MASCOT

By Robert Bao

Sparty has gained great national visibility lately, a tribute to its cool design as well as to the efforts behind the MSUAA's mascot program.

He's our own jolly green giant. Lovable, huggable, and for Spartans of every age, ever so photo-poseable.

Last fall, MSU's beloved Sparty leaped into national celebrity in the same dramatic fashion that gymnast Kerri Strug vaulted into Olympian his-

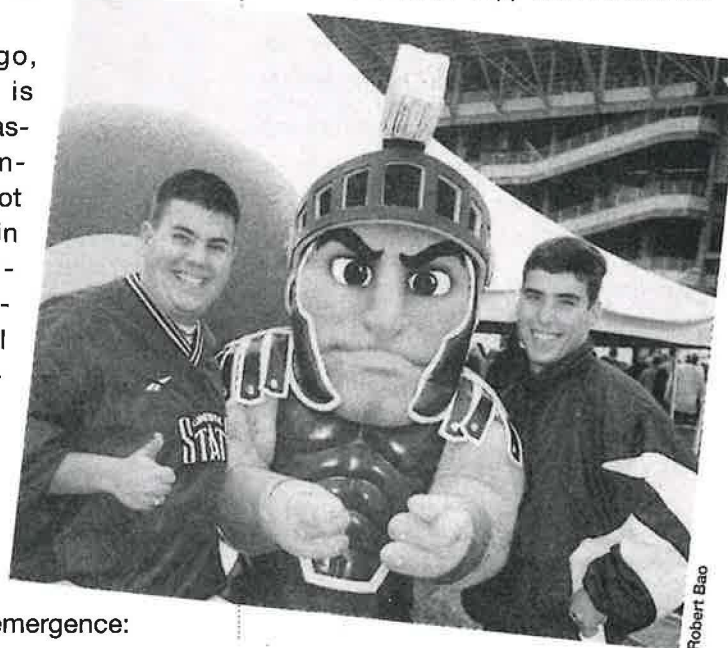
tory at the Atlanta games. It happened when ESPN showed Sparty holding Strug—"Beauty and the Beast" style—in its national advertising campaign for "SportsCenter."

As "beasts" go, however, Sparty is way-cool. He's massive, but cartoon-cute. The seven-foot costume weighs in at 30 pounds, allowing enough flexibility for playful gestures and animation. To Spartan fans, his national popularity came as no surprise.

Here's a thumbnail sketch of Sparty's meteoric emergence:

► Last August, Sparty won the "leadership" award from his peers at the

SAF co-directors Tyson Ferguson (right) and Jamie Trapp flank the mascot.



Robert Bao



One of the 1996 Homecoming Parade floats featured Sparty as a cereal box personality.

nation's largest mascot camp in Milwaukee, WI.

► Throughout the fall, Sparty starred in a series of ESPN ads promoting "SportsCenter," a campaign that probably reached every sports fan in America with cable TV.

► To help attendance, Sparty was chosen to host the 1996 Homecoming Dance—re-christened "Sparty's Party"—featuring the Marvelettes and Gary Lewis and the Playboys.

► Sparty starred in MSU's 30-second TV commercial beamed to the nation during ABC-TV's telecast of the Michigan football game Nov. 2. In this MTV-pace ad, Sparty rides a rocket ship, surfs the web, and does acrobatics.

Sparty's many fans will be surprised to learn that just a few years ago, the current Sparty mascot did not exist. In fact, Sparty was introduced for the first time in the Fall of 1989.

That was just a few weeks after LoRae Hamilton, '73, became an assistant director of MSUAA and adviser for the Student Alumni Foundation—the alumni association's stu-

dent arm—which now runs the program.

"It happened about six weeks after I joined the MSU Alumni Association," recalls Hamilton, or "Sparty's mom," as some now call her. "Tom Sapp, from a company in Atlanta, created the design. He came here and did a lot of research about Michigan State and MSU tradition."

"It was an instant success. From the get-go, everyone loved Sparty!"

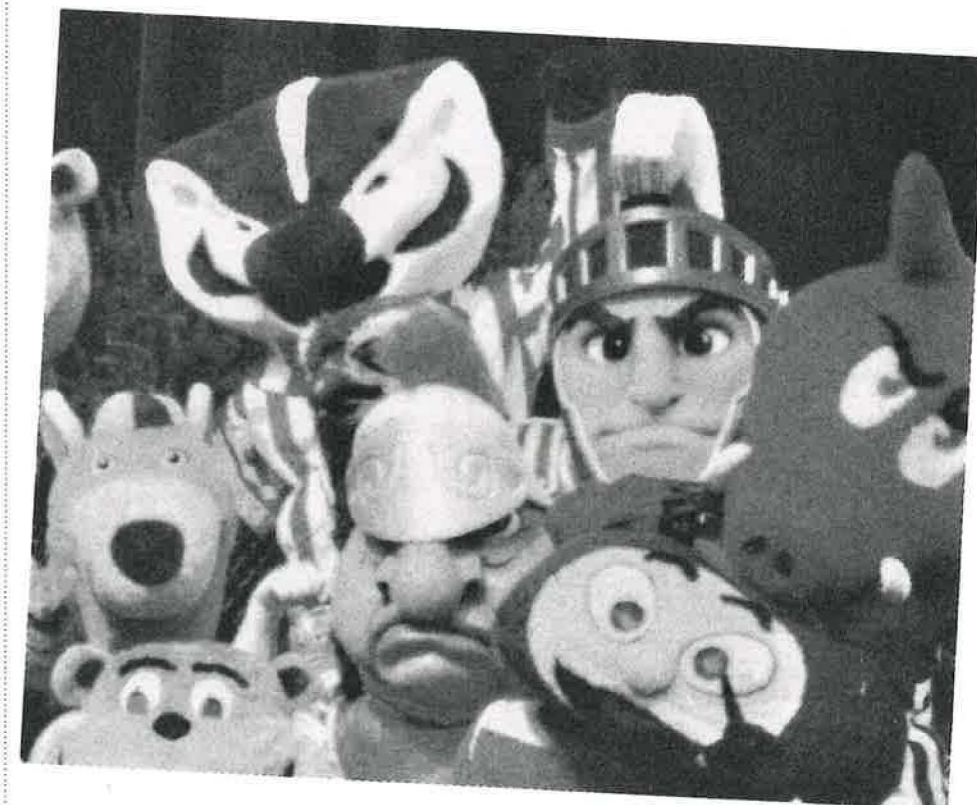
Made of hi-tech materials, including a vinyl chest plate and fiberglass molds like the ones used for making Muppets, Sparty is a far cry from the many papier-mâché heads that have popped up since the 1950s, mostly from fraternity efforts. The first official one apparently debuted in 1955 (see "First Sparty," p. 2), courtesy of Theta Xi.

Other versions were introduced from time to time. In 1984, Sigma Phi Epsilon introduced the first "gruff" head—sporting the unshaven look that still adorns many sweat shirts and jackets.

By contrast, the current Sparty costume is a state-of-the-art, full-bodied uniform that costs about \$8,000 and, in Hamilton's words, "is breathable, flexible and moveable." It's also "washable," a cumbersome task LoRae diligently performs whenever necessary.

The mascot program is run by two SAF members, seniors Jamie Trapp and Tyson Ferguson. "We do the schedules, coordinate the escorts, make the transportation arrangements," says Trapp, who, as an escort the previous two years, provided the mascot with water and towels. As he notes, "On a hot day, Sparty loses from three to five pounds."

Today five students—their identities kept private—take turns being Sparty with one of two costumes. Because of the costume size, Sparty



Sparty won the "leadership" award last summer at the nation's largest mascot camp in Wisconsin.



As star of a 30-second institutional ad that ran during ABC-TV's national telecast of the 1996 MSU-Michigan game, Sparty adopted many poses during the ten-hour "blue screen" shoot.

aspirants must be between 5-10 and 6-2 in height. Candidates who fit the physical needs are chosen after a hands-on process that includes interviews and rehearsals.

The Sparty mascot program is funded mainly by the MSUAA, and receives some support from the MSU Dept. of Athletics. Last year, for example, associate athletic director Kathy Lindahl helped Sparty make it to the NCAA volleyball finals in Massachusetts and to the wom-

en's basketball NCAA appearance in Connecticut.

"We're always looking for ways to supplement our income," says co-director Ferguson, who is also an MSU cheerleader. "We'll do weddings, graduation events, private events, MSUAA regional club events. We just need two weeks notice. A request form needs to be filled."

The cost is \$200 per appearance, roughly an hour. Those who have hired Sparty have invariably been more than satisfied, given the mascot's enduring popularity.

"Especially with the kids," says Hamilton, who adds that only one Sparty will appear at one time. "Sparty is really like Santa Claus. The kids believe in him. So we never show more than one at a time."

Those interested in hiring Sparty can call the Student Alumni Foundation at 517-355-4458. Those who wish to donate to the Sparty mascot fund can contact University Development at 517-355-8257. Those interested in seeing the Sparty Home Page on the World Wide Web can access the MSUAA Home Page

(<http://alumni.msu.edu/alumni/>) and navigate to it via the SAF page.

From inchoate mascot to national celebrity in less than a decade, this Sparty is destined to prevail for a while. So long as fans continue their



LoRae Hamilton, aka "Sparty's Mom."

support, and Sparty's mom remains protective of her creation, the MSUAA's mascot program will continue to flourish and provide fans with a distinctive, lovable, and classy mascot—a national celebrity to boot.

Useful SpartyFacts

To hire Sparty, call the Student Alumni Foundation, **517-355-4458.**

To donate to the Sparty mascot program, call University Development, **517-355-8257.**

For more information, visit Sparty's Home Page on the World Wide Web, (<http://alumni.msu.edu/alumni/sparty.html>).



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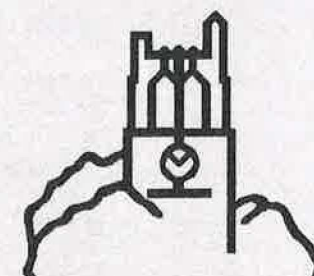
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MSU is Close To You!

SPARTAN NICKNAME

HOW SPARTY BEGAN!

NICKNAME

In 1926, Michigan State's first southern baseball training tour provided the setting for the birth of the "Spartan" nickname.

It all came about when a Lansing sportswriter imposed the silent treatment on a contest-winning nickname and substituted his own choice, the name that has lasted through the years.

In 1925, Michigan State College replaced the name Michigan Agricultural College. The college sponsored a contest to select a nickname to replace "Aggies" and picked "The Michigan Staters."

George S. Alderton, then sports editor of the Lansing State Journal, decided the name was too cumbersome for newspaper writing and vowed to find a better one.

Alderton contacted Jim Hasselman of Information Services to see if entries still remained from the contest. When informed that they still existed, Alderton ran across the entry name of "Spartans" and then decided that was the choice. Unfortunately, Alderton forgot to write down who submitted that particular entry, so that part of the story remains a mystery.

Rewriting game accounts supplied by Perry Fremont, a catcher on the squad, Alderton first used the name sparingly and then ventured into the headlines with it. (Incidentally, after two days of spelling the name incorrectly with an "o", Mr. Alderton changed it to Spartan on a tip from a close friend.) Dale Stafford, a sports writer for the Lansing Capitol News, a rival of the State Journal, picked up the name for his paper after a couple of days. Alderton called Stafford and suggested that he might want to join the Spartan parade and he did. As Mr. Alderton explains: "No student, alumnus or college official had called up the editor to complain about our audacity in giving the old school a new name, so we ventured into headlines with it. Happily for the experiment, the name took. It began appearing in other newspapers and when the student publication used it, that clinched it."

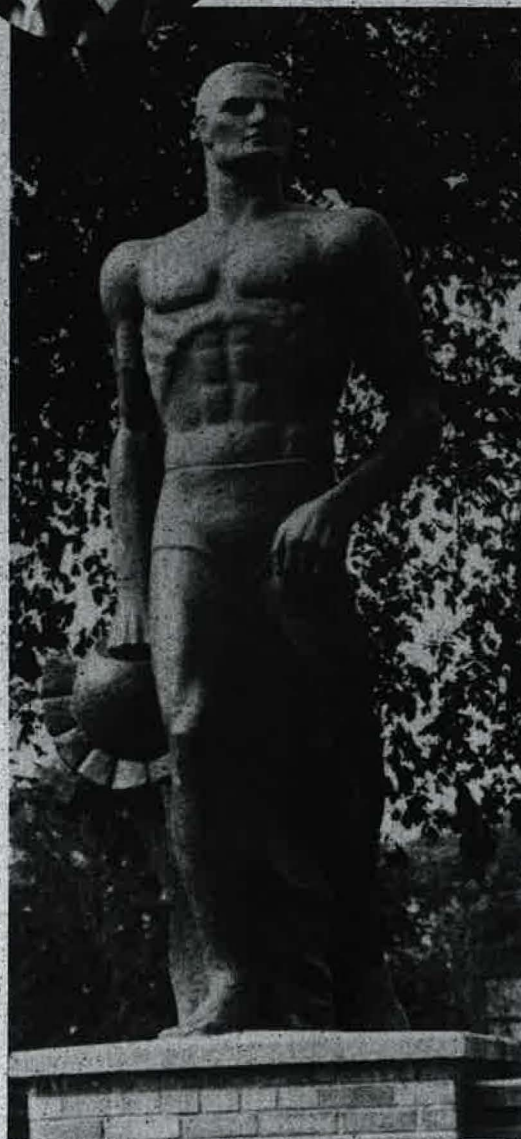
THE SCHOOL COLORS

Details are sketchy as to when Michigan State athletic teams officially began using the school colors green and white. But records of the Athletic Association of the then Michigan Agricultural College show that on April 11, 1899, the organization took steps toward adoption of a green monogram, "to be worn only by athletes who subsequently take part in intercollegiate events."

It is generally thought the colors came into wide use with the arrival in 1903 of Chester L. Brewer as the school's first full-time director of athletics. Brewer also coached the Spartan football, basketball, baseball and track teams, the only varsity units in existence at the time.



Alderton



SPARTY

Standing at the entrance way to Michigan State's athletic establishment is "The Spartan," a huge statue which symbolizes the university's athletic teams.

"The Spartan" was designed and produced by Leonard D. Jungwirth of the art department, and dedicated in June of 1945. It stands ten feet-six inches, and is mounted on a brick-and-concrete base five feet-four inches high. The statue weighs three tons and is one of the largest free standing ceramic figures in the world.

Figures representing the 12 sports then included in the varsity program are incised on the base of the statue.

Popularly known as "Sparty," the statue is one of the favorite photo subjects of visitors to the campus.

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Sept. 15, 1999

Sparty turns 10

Mascot's birthday sparks a season of big bashes at MSU

By Vincent Delgado
Lansing State Journal

EAST LANSING — When it comes to college mascots, Jeff Miller prefers MSU's buff-built Sparty over cuddly gophers and back-flipping badgers.

"Those guys get old in a hurry," said Miller, 21, a Michigan State University cheerleader and Sparty fan. "Sparty never gets old."

Well, actually, he does. The latest big-headed, foam-filled Sparty incarnation will run into Spartan Stadium before 73,000 fans Thursday as a 10-year-old — a milestone MSU officials and alumni are using for a season of birthday parties, fund-raisers and tailgate bashes.

Among the events planned is an attempt for a slot in the Guinness Book of World Records with the World's Largest Birthday Party.

MSU officials hope to beat out the 113,572 that showed up for a birthday party during Rockford, Ill.'s. On the Waterfront Festival in September 1998.

On Oct. 2, when MSU plays Iowa, fans will be invited to a tent for cake and other festivities. Donations for slices of cake will benefit MSU Safe Place, a domestic violence shelter.

"It's going to be double-digits for Sparty now," said Karen Twigg, the assistant director of the MSU Alumni Association who is helping to plan the activities. "There will be lots of cake, lots of singing. Sparty's



1984

an old guy."

The current Sparty mascot debuted Sept. 16, 1989, replacing a series of papier-mache-headed mascots that had been around since the 1950s.

The mascot may face another change in appearance.

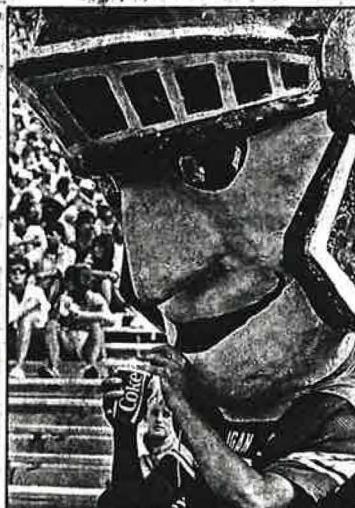
The man who created the mascot from materials that include foam and thermo-plastic molds like the ones used for making the Muppet puppets,

Face-lift:

Sparty, the mascot for Michigan State University, has had various looks over the years, from a clean-shaven grin to a whiskered scowl to a clean-shaven sterness.



Lansing State Journal file photos 1989-1999



1959-1984



1985

Sparty: Mascot turns 10

Continued FROM 1B

Each of the three 7-foot Sparty costumes weighs 30 pounds. Officials say the unidentified students who play him lose 3 to 5 pounds per game.

Yet a chance to wear one of the \$12,000 getups is one of the most sought-after volunteer jobs on campus, officials say. In February, nearly 40 students competed for the job.

How many actually got the job is unclear. Why? Being a Sparty is like belonging to a secret society.

Alumni association officials, according to tradition, guard the number of students playing Sparty and their identities like state secrets.

"There is only one Sparty," maintains Bev Vandenberg, an office assistant with the MSU Student Alumni Foundation, which helps coordinate the mascot.

Attempts to interview Sparty — any Sparty — were rebuffed by student booking agent J.C. Weigelt, 21.

"I know what he's feeling. I hang around him all the time," said the senior marketing major from St. Paul, Minn.

"To this day, it's still an adrenaline rush to him. He can't wait for the games. He can't sleep the night before. That rush running through the tunnel is just incredible."

Sparty parties

Sparty turns 10 this year and the campus is ready to celebrate. These Oct. 2 festivities are planned:

■ Sparty's "World's Largest Birthday Party": Before, during and after Oct. 2 MSU-Iowa game in a tent north of the stadium. There is a \$1 suggested donation for a slice of birthday cake to benefit MSU Safe Place.

■ Green and White tailgate party: 9 a.m. to noon by the MSU Alumni Association outside Spartan Stadium. Includes rounds of "For He's a Jolly Good Mascot."

■ Spartan Family Pep Rally: 9 a.m. to noon by the MSU Student Alumni Association at the Ralph Track Infield. Includes a visit from Sparty and happy birthday songs.

■ Half-time MSU-Iowa game: Round of birthday songs for Sparty.

Please see SPARTY, 3B

Tale of the giant big-headed Sparty

By PEGGY GOSSETT

State News Sports Writer

After every football game Kevin Cole loses six feet and 70 pounds, and fans claim he has the biggest head at MSU.

Kevin Cole is Sparty, the lovable paper-mache Spartan head that bobs six feet above fans' flat-tops and fros and bounces about the sidelines with his ever-cheering grin. But after bobbing and bouncing for three hours Cole is rather relieved to chuck the 70-pound, big-nosed Sparty and just carry

around his own head.

"I'm tired man," Cole said Saturday as he unstrapped the elaborate triple-buckled harness that holds the giant head on his shoulders. "I dig this, but toward the fourth quarter Sparty gets a little heavy. During the North Carolina game this year I lost 10 pounds water weight, it was so hot."

Cole transforms into Sparty just before the toss of the coin and does not become himself again until the final second of the football game is ticked off.

During this Jeckyl and Hyde sort of situation, there is no real split between Cole the criminal justice major called "wildman" by his Fiji fraternity brothers, and Sparty, the physical epitome of Spartan perfection which MSU athletes allegedly represent.

"I love it! That's why I do it. I think Sparty adds a lot to the atmosphere at football games," Cole said. "anything out there helps fans' spirit and they all dig the giant-headed Sparty."

Cole relishes it so much he

stands the post-game headaches, sore shoulders from sporting the Sparty head, and obnoxious fans heaving apple cores at him.

"Especially the OSU fans were obnoxious. They hit me with bottles and apples and insults. They were the worst," Cole lamented.

Since all sounds resonate within the paper-mache cavity (Sparty, no doubt, stores his brains elsewhere), Cole sometimes develops headaches after three hours of nearly nonstop cheering and blasting bands, not to mention apple cores ping-pong off his head.

"Plus, people think I can't hear a thing and they scream at me. Meanwhile everything they just said is magnified and resonates inside the head," Cole said with a cringe.

Sparty is also a "P.R." man, a walking green and white good will man whose heart is as big as his head.

"I had pictures taken with people in a special wheelchair section of the stadium, and it made their day," Cole grinned. "There's always those hard-luck kids who maybe can't get to talk to any of the players, but they dig talking to me."

Cole said last week a child in the stands wanted to have his picture taken with Sparty. Cole trudged 20 rows up the bleachers, not an easy feat with a 70-pound head, only to have the kid burst into tears, lamenting "But his head is too big!"

Mishaps don't often plague Cole while wearing the monstrous head, but he often walks

right over megaphones and football equipment without knowing it.

"I only have one-fourth of my sight," said Cole, who peers through Sparty's mouth to see. "I just kinda go where I have to go and hope I don't run into anything."

Like Lassie, Flipper and Bruce the shark, Sparty has had predecessors, all called Sparty, who had to be replaced due to trampling and crumpling and the quick aging process which plagues all show business creatures. Three other Sparties who were critically wounded in action now lay at rest and the current fourth Sparty has been patched three times already.

At Notre Dame three years ago, for example, a Notre Dame fan fell across Sparty during the singing of the national anthem and scarred his fine paper mache features. Poor Sparty was on waivers until his face-job was completed. At this year's Notre Dame game, in addition to fans ridiculing him, Sparty was nearly kidnapped off the Catholic field by two Notre Dame men.

"But we yelled and they dropped Sparty and ran," Cole said. "Thank God."

Sparty's conception can only be attributed to mysterious spontaneous generation, as no one on campus seems to know exactly where he came from. The most notable theory attributes his birth to the Sig-Eps (Sigma Epsilon) fraternity which Cole said is allegedly responsible for constructing the

original Sparty in the 1960's. Since then, however, Sparty has had various foster-parents, including cheerleaders, other fraternity men and the ROTC.

"He has not been taken care of very well," Cole said.

Therefore, Cole, an MSU cheerleader last year, carefully carts Sparty to away games at his own cost, and spends 70 dollars and six days repainting and painting Sparty. He also



Kevin Cole

plans to arrange try-outs for the MSU mascot similar to cheerleader try-outs instead of letting anyone just tote the Spartan head in order to get into games free.

"All other schools hold try-outs for their mascot, like the OSU buckeye nut," Cole said.

In the meantime Cole continues the Sparty tradition with more dedication than the ancient Greeks of powerful Sparta could claim.

It's doubtless they humored rotten fans and apple cores to be true to their school.

Hockey tickets missing in Munn student section

Several MSU student-hockey fans want them. Bill Beardsley, assistant athletic director and ticket manager, said that students can have them.

But, nobody seems to know who's got them.

If the above sounds confusing, it should. It's the annual MSU hockey game.

"We've designated certain areas for students," Beardsley commented. "It was a difficult thing to decide, because each hockey fan likes a different seat at the arena. So, it was agreed that we would place the students in rows 13-18 in various sections throughout the arena."

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SN photo/Bob Koye

Sparty, the MSU mascot, can be seen walking the sidelines at every MSU football game where he receives his fair share of cheers and abuse.

MSU Sparty (Status & emblems)

The Sparty contest



Entry No. 1



Entry No. 2



Entry No. 3



Entry No. 4



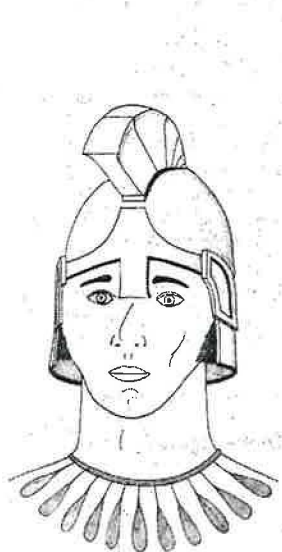
Entry No. 5



Entry No. 6



Entry No. 7



Entry No. 8



Entry No. 9



Entry No. 10



Entry No. 11

MSU students gain chance to vote

The continuing saga of Sparty drags on and on and on...

But now MSU students will get a chance to vote on which Sparty they prefer and hopefully put the matter to rest forever.

It started over a month ago when Robert Perrin, MSU vice president for University and federal relations, decided that the present Sparty, a tough-looking bearded cartoon character, didn't present the right image for Spartan athletic teams.

Perrin thought the current Sparty looked like a thug and announced a contest to find a new school symbol. Perrin offered a \$100 reward for the person who came up with the best drawing and then the battle began.

The majority of the letters to the editor in the State News were in

favor of retaining the present Sparty and a number of them even suggested that the University should get rid of Perrin and keep Sparty.

Two students collected about 1,200 signatures on a petition which they presented to Perrin with the hope of saving Sparty.

Perrin said he was surprised by the heavy support that Sparty had received but, since a number of people had entered the contest, he still wanted to award the prize to the best entry.

Perrin then asked for the help of the State News, which agreed to publish pictures and let MSU students vote on which of the new designs they favored.

And who says nobody cares what students think?

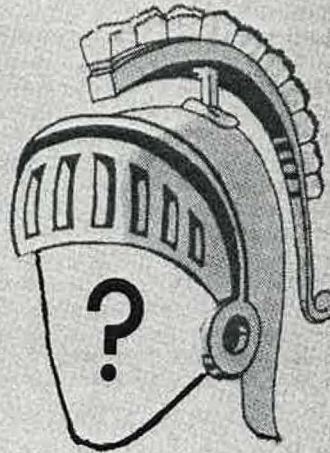
Tuesday, June 1, 1976

It's your choice

The official Sparty ballot

- Entry No. 1 ☐
- Entry No. 2 ☐
- Entry No. 3 ☐
- Entry No. 4 ☐
- Entry No. 5 ☐
- Entry No. 6 ☐
- Entry No. 7 ☐
- Entry No. 8 ☐
- Entry No. 9 ☐
- Entry No. 10 ☐
- Entry No. 11 ☐

Here is the official "I-can't-believe-this-is-for-real" Sparty ballot. Please indicate your choice with a check mark. If you have alternate preferences, mark your top choice with a '1' and number your second and other choices accordingly. Send them to Robert Perrin, 474 Administration Bldg. Entries must be received no later than Friday of this week to be included in the tabulation.



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to '60s, and graduated from its high school in 1971. Those of us in the junior high band could not wait until we were allowed to ride down the Flat River on the showboat, tooting out "Here Comes the Showboat" while the engines groaned around Cattail Bend. What a ride!

Crista Simmons
Richland

EXPLORING WHITE RIVER

The interview with Frances Marshall in the May/June 2010 issue of *Michigan History* tells about Marshall's experiences as a lighthouse keeper at White River.

During our pleasure boating cruises, we had never visited White River or Lake. The published article awakened our curiosity to further explore Great Lakes Cruising Club Report M-21 on this light station. The report revealed much history about the river, the lake, the lighthouse, and the area's first discovery.

The report described early French explorers mapping and napping at White Lake during the year 1675. Mapping was one of the responsibilities of Jesuit priests, as they had the education and intellect to write journals and draw maps. The report's pages, written by Kenneth G. Smith, gave us a feel of the way it was done at the time of exploration.

Paul Theriault
Petoskey

REMEMBERING SWIFT LATHERS

It was a nice surprise to find Swift Lathers featured in the July/August 2010 issue. Living near Mears, I remember giving rides to the editor as he walked the byways gathering news in the 1960s. I didn't supply him with much fodder, as I was wary of being used as a source for one of his mischievous articles. His style delighted

some, but vexed others.

Years later, I am now one of the volunteer docents in Swift's museum-home. As I reread his newspapers, I appreciate what a valuable historical resource he left us and, yes, I am amused just as he intended.

Those interested in seeing if—or what—Swift wrote about them can search through online archives of the *Mears Newz* at www.oceanahistory.org.

Esther Moul
Hart

A 1980s SPARTY RESPONDS

Shortly after reading the article titled "I Remember Sparty" (September/October 2010), my wife came running into our family room announcing, "Look, there's an article about you in this edition of *Michigan History*!" Of course, the article was not about me, but rather reminded her of my time as Sparty during my college days at Michigan State University.

I thought it might be helpful to bridge the gap between when Bruce Kefgen ended his wonderful article and the current state of Sparty the mascot. I too was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon during the 1980s and was honored to be one of three Spartys during the M.S.U. football seasons of 1984 and 1985.

We used the head pictured in Bruce's article up until the fall of 1984. In that year, the Sig Eps redesigned and resculpted the head to present a meaner-looking face as well as to make the head lighter and easier to wear. We Spartys would enter the stadium wearing a football uniform consisting of shoulder pads, jersey, and pants and circle the field on a chariot towed by a large Fiberglas football covering a riding lawnmower tractor. The creator and operator of the football tractor was Dr. Bigelow, an alumnus and retired veterinarian.

Before games, I remember being carried around and among tailgaters in the back of a pickup truck with my fraternity brothers. Fans at the tailgate

parties would gather around to get a picture with Sparty, even giving us money (which we used for gas for the truck) and free food. I have many fond memories of those days, including the time when the University of Michigan Sig Ep chapter raided our house and kidnapped the Sparty head. We road-tripped to Ann Arbor to retrieve it, where we found it hanging out of a window at the chapter house with its face painted half maize and half blue.

Those were truly great times. Business associates and partners of mine love to tell everyone they meet that I was once the M.S.U. mascot. However, the greatest joy I get from the experience is seeing the tradition live on. This is especially true when my family attends an M.S.U. football game, and I watch my 13- and 9-year-old daughters run up to Sparty to get a picture and proudly say, "My daddy was Sparty once."

Todd Pickard
Birmingham, AL

CORRECTION

July/August 2010

"Nelson & Eliza Truckey: A Civil War Saga": The lighthouse that Mrs. H. Lubuck served at from 1862 to 1865 was Grand Island North.



LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

We welcome your comments, questions, and concerns and will print your communications as space permits. Write us at Editor, *Michigan History Magazine*, 5815 Executive Drive, Lansing, MI 48911 or e-mail mhmeditor@hsmichigan.org.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published July 2, 2006

Sparty up for spot in Mascot Hall of Fame

MSU icon 1 of 6 from colleges to be nominated

By Matthew Miller
Lansing State Journal

Sparty, the foam muscle-bound mascot of Michigan State University, has been given a shot at mascot immortality.

The ample-chinned symbol of MSU is one of the first six collegiate mascots nominated for induction into the Mascot Hall of Fame.

"I think it's a fitting tribute to Sparty and his history and all his merits," said Chad Susott, co-director of the Sparty Mascot Program.

He rattled off a list of Sparty's recent achievements: winner of Universal Cheer Association's national college mascot competition in 2004 and 2005, named "Buffest Mascot" by Muscle and Fitness magazine, numerous roles in commercials for ESPN's SportsCenter.

"From what I've heard from the judges," Susott added, "things are looking pretty good for us."

While its name might evoke history and tradition, the Mascot Hall of Fame was created only last year, and it has no brick-and-mortar "hall," just a Web page.



(Photo by Associated Press file photo)
Muscle-bound mascot: Sparty cheers on Michigan State seniors Lindsay Bowen (left) and Liz Shimek as they thank the crowd following their final home basketball game in February. Sparty is nominated for induction into the Mascot Hall of Fame.

MASCOT HALL OF FAME

- To vote for Sparty, go to:
[www.mascothalloffame.com /Poll.asp](http://www.mascothalloffame.com/Poll.asp)

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Dave Raymond, president of the hall's executive committee and the original Phillie Phanatic, admits the project was started because it seemed like "serious fun."

"But we want it to be a serious honor to be inducted," he added.

Last year, the Hall inducted San Diego's Famous Chicken, the Phoenix Gorilla and the Phanatic.

This year, he said, "We thought the natural next step would be some of the most recognized, most valued, most leveraged characters, and those are collegiate characters."

Just how much Sparty is valued is evident from an online poll set up on the Hall's Web site. Sparty already has garnered well over 200,000 votes.

But, while those online votes will be a factor, the final decision will be left to the hall's 500-plus voting members, many of them professional mascots, sports executives and members of the media.

It's not a head-to-head competition, exactly. Raymond said it's possible that all the nominees could be inducted - possible, but unlikely.

Chris Ernest believes Sparty's chances are good.

Of course, he understands the character's appeal better than most. He played him in 1994 and '95, before going on to be a mascot for the Detroit Tigers and later the Detroit Pistons.

"Sparty is an icon on the MSU campus," said Ernest, who's now an actor in Los Angeles. "People just come up to you and hug you, give you high-fives on game days."

It can be an odd experience, ego-wise, he said, because "You're walking around as this icon, but when you take off the suit, it's like Batman.

"Nobody knows who Bruce Wayne is."

But, if Sparty gets inducted - and Ernest believes his chances are better than most - he said he'd feel a bit of personal pride.

"I would think that all the former Spartys would feel the same," he said.

As luck would have it, at least one former Sparty - Brad Collins, who played him from 2001 to 2003 - also is a voting member of the Mascot Hall of Fame.

"Sparty's got the history. He's got the loyal fan base, and he's instantly recognizable" said Collins, who now plays the mascot of the Fresno Grizzlies, a minor league baseball team.

"I'm pretty certain I'll vote for him."

Contact Matthew Miller at 377-1046 or mrmiller@lsj.com.

Celebrating Sparty

Student Alumni Foundation nominates MSU mascot for hall of fame

By [MARA DEUTCH](#)

The State News

Prancing around MSU sports games, spending quality time with the community or just hanging out at the library, Sparty is everywhere.

And the Mascot Hall of Fame may be the next place he'll be hanging out. The MSU Student Alumni Foundation, or SAF, sent in a nomination application Friday for Sparty to join the exclusive club as part of the 2006 hall of fame class.

"We feel Sparty is the best college mascot in the nation," said Philip Lator, co-director for the Sparty Program within SAF. "(Sparty) has won the national championship with the (Universal Cheer Association) so we feel he deserves a spot in the hall of fame."

The Web-based Mascot Hall of Fame, which was started in 2005, opened its selection process to collegiate mascots this year and is expecting between 30 and 40 college mascots to apply, said Christopher Bruce, vice chairperson of the Executive Committee for the hall of fame.

"As we developed and evolved, we always knew we wanted to include collegiate mascots and eventually, down the road, corporate mascots," Bruce said. "At this point we have it set up so that a total of six mascots can be put on the ballot in both the professional and collegiate categories. Any one of those characters can make it in — it just deals with the vote requirement and getting through the first round."

Once all of the applications are in, the Executive Committee, which is comprised of professional performers, team owners, collegiate representatives and others, meets to review the nominees and vote for who they think should be on the ballot.

A group of voting members, which includes people who donate to the Mascot Hall of Fame, performers, mascot program coordinators and others, vote on the ballot to officially choose the mascots that will be inducted into this year's hall of fame, Bruce said.

Last year, 50 mascots gathered in Newark, Del., for the induction ceremony to honor the first inaugural class, which included the Phoenix Gorilla, The Famous Chicken from San Diego and the Phillie Phanatic. The 2006 induction ceremony will be held Aug. 15 in Philadelphia.

SAF put together a three-minute video to go along with the application for Sparty, which included footage of him interacting with crowds at sports games, campus pep rallies and getting involved with the community while participating in cancer walks and fundraisers, Lator said.

"He is great and has a great personality; he's charming," Lator said. "He's kind of a step above where a lot of mascots are."

Since his unveiling on Sept. 16, 1989 at Spartan Stadium, Sparty has had numerous accomplishments. He won the "Buffest Mascot in the Nation" from Muscle and Fitness magazine in 1998, 2002 and 2004 and was the national champion in 2004 and 2005 in the Universal Cheer Association Nationals Competition.

The Mascot Hall of Fame hopes to create a Web-based poll for fans to submit their votes,

along with a blog so the executive committee can get comments from the public.

"We want to hear from all of those MSU fans about how great Sparty is," Bruce said.

Location: <http://www.statenews.com/article.phtml?pk=36186>

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The State News

URL: http://statenews.com/index.php/article/2009/10/former_mascots_come_together_to_celebrate_20_years_of_sparty
Current Date: Mon, 26 Oct 2009 16:58:54 -0400

Former mascots come together to celebrate 20 years of Sparty

By [Carter Moulton](#) (Last updated: 17 hours ago)

Sparty is one of the most well-known mascots in collegiate history. The three-time National Mascot of the Year has appeared on ESPN commercials, video game covers and even is a member of the Mascot Hall of Fame.

Quite an accomplished life for a 20-year-old.

About 40 former Spartys gathered Saturday in the Galaxy Room at the Kellogg Center for a brunch reunion to celebrate Sparty's 20-year anniversary. The current Sparty was on hand and received a birthday wish accompanied by a cake.

Stella Cash, executive director of the MSU Alumni Association, pointed to Sparty's up-for-anything attitude as a main attribute for Sparty's legacy.

"Sparty is more than just an athletic icon," she said. "He's been in our most personal family events, from weddings to bar mitzvah's to family reunions. Sparty at Michigan State is very, very important."

Sparty's roots

In the spring of 1989, Dave Russell was a student working for the athletics department. During his lunchtime, he played basketball with a member of the committee that was formed to discuss implementing a costumed mascot at the university.

Russell was asked if he was interested, and after he said yes, he flew down to Atlanta to meet with the costume designer.

The mascot was inspired by Hairy Dawg, the University of Georgia's mascot for the, in the sense that MSU wanted Sparty to become a universal icon, not just a costumed cheerleader.

That fall, Russell rolled onto the field of Spartan Stadium in the back of a convertible as the first Sparty.

"At the time I didn't really realize that, 'Hey I'm the first one, this is going to be a big deal,' but now I realize it's amazing to be the first one; it's an honor," he said.

Like anyone, Sparty's appearance has changed little by little throughout his first 20 years. But none of the changes, such as a smaller jaw area and sized-down legs, are noticeable from the stands, Russell said.

Sparty's secrets

The secrecy of who is wearing the costume always has been present, although volunteers can reveal their identity after their duties are complete. There is no two-year or 10-year rule, as some believe.

Concealing the Sparty's identity helped Russell feel comfortable performing as the character.

"With 70,000 people in the stands, at some point there's going to be at least 500 people looking at you no matter where you are," Russell said.

"It's the best of both worlds because you have all of those people looking at you, but there's no reason to have inhibitions about it because they don't know who you are, so you can be free."

In addition to relaxing the nerves, Jeff Kemperman, Sparty from 2003-05, noted the camaraderie of former Spartys that comes with this secrecy.

“Being Sparty when you’re on the squad is a secret, so a lot of the cool stuff that happens you can’t tell your roommates about, you can’t tell your friends about, so you have this bond, this brotherhood with these other guys,” Kemperman said.

Throughout Sparty’s first 20 years, there only has been one female to land the coveted role: Erin Riley Bormes, who donned the costume from 1997-98.

She was a mascot in high school and visited MSU for a quarterfinal game when her mother challenged her to consider being Sparty. She signed up for a tryout, which includes an application, essays, skits and on-the-spot performances, and made her debut in a football game against Western Michigan University in 1997.

“You transform into a different person when you put that costume on,” she said.

“I had to be very cautious to be very masculine in the costume, and I got in trouble from my family a couple times that I was more girlish than mannish, but we remedied that really quick.”

For the alumni who gathered Saturday, the honor that comes with being Sparty has proved to be a life-changing experience.

“I’ve been a Michigan State fan my entire life,” Kemperman said. “There’s really no bigger honor. It’s really hard to describe what it feels like to have the announcer say, ‘And now the world’s greatest mascot, Sparty,’ and you come chucking out of the tunnel in front of 80,000 people.

“It doesn’t get any better than that. Even talking about it now I kind of get that goose-bump feeling, just that feeling of, only 41 of us have ever experienced that.”

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Published January 14, 2007

Sparty is No. 1 mascot, again

90-second skit lifts him to top collegiate spot

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

On the Web

- MSU's cheer and dance teams are also competing at a national competition in Orlando, Fla. Results are expected to be posted tonight at www.varsity.com.

ORLANDO, FLA. - Sparty, Michigan State University's mascot, has regained his title as the nation's top collegiate mascot.

He won the honor at the Universal Cheer Association's national competition, which is being held at Walt Disney World.

Sparty, who officials said is the only Big Ten mascot to claim the title, won back-to-back national championships in 2004 and 2005. He placed third last year.

Ten mascots, including Sparty, performed 90-second skits Friday. Half of the final score came from a submitted videotape.

Sparty, who university officials will only identify as a full-time MSU student, was in second place based on the video. The skit - which included spoofs of the rock band KISS as well as Lord of the Dance and Justin Timberlake - propelled the MSU mascot to victory.

"He had the entire crowd rolling in their seats," said Ross Ramsey, an MSU graduate student advisor for the student alumni foundation, which oversees the Sparty program.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

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FUNDRAISER

Jones Soda labels showcase Sparty

By Tom Keller
The State News

After being named last year's number one mascot, Sparty has something else to cheer about — his picture on thousands of bottles of soda.

MSU and Jones Soda Co., a Seattle-based beverage maker, came to an agreement in December to feature pictures of Sparty, the Universal Cheer Association's 2004 Mascot of the Year, on a series of bottles.

About 60,000 bottles of the soda, in green apple and cream soda flavors, will feature six different labels with pictures of Sparty around campus.

Jones Soda representatives will be handing out samples of the soda from 1-3 p.m. Monday in the basement of the International Center.

A percentage of the sales will go toward the Sparty Mascot Program, which is run by the MSU Student Alumni Foundation. The program arranges bookings for Sparty and maintains the mascot's costume.

"It's a win-win situation," said Paul Wirries, Jones Soda regional manager for Michigan. "SAF needed to raise money and we



Cream Soda and Green Apple Jones Soda Co. bottles featuring Sparty are now available at Sparty's Convenience Stores and Lansing-area Meijer stores.

Tommy Andres/The State News

decided that Sparty was pretty cool."

Matt Warpinski, vice president of marketing for SAF, said the group expects to make about \$2,000 from the agreement.

MSU is the first university

to have this agreement with Jones Soda, said Gene Mezo, Jones Soda sales manager for Michigan.

The company has since been contacted by other universities, including the University of Notre Dame and The Ohio State University, but has yet to arrange any similar programs.

"This is a test case for the country," Warpinski said.

Mezo said the decision to make Sparty the first collegiate mascot on a Jones Soda bottle was an easy one.

Michigan, and the MSU campus, have been some of Jones Soda's most consistent consumer bases, Mezo said.

The state of Michigan accounts for 20 percent of all of Jones Soda's carbonated beverage sales for North America, and Case Hall's Barista Café alone sells about 2,000 bottles a week — more than any other location in the world, Mezo said.

"MSU is the most Jonesed-out campus in America," Mezo said. "The amount of sales we get out of this campus is unreal."

MSU's colors also align with consumers' tastebuds — cream soda and green apple are the two most popular Jones Soda flavors in North America, Mezo said.

The soda will be available at several locations in the area, including all 19 Sparty's

"MSU is the most Jonesed-out campus in America. The amount of sales we get out of this campus is unreal."

Gene Mezo

Jones Soda sales manager for Michigan

Convenience Stores, Union Central Store and Spartan Bookstore on campus.

Lansing area CVS Pharmacy, Meijer, 7-Eleven and Marathon Gas Station stores will sell the soda off campus.

Some local retailers said they expect the soda to sell quickly now that students are back on campus.

"We won't even put it in the cooler — we'll just sell it warm," said Cathy Estrada, assistant store manager at Union Central Store.

Wirries said that only about 30,000 bottles of each flavor will be produced, and then the labels will be retired to preserve their status as a collector's item.

But Jones Soda still owns the patent, so another line of Spartan soda in the near future isn't out of the question.

"As long as it's still fun, we want to keep doing it," Wirries said.

Search for new Sparty underway

By **KATHERINE SHEPARDSON**
The State News

Students now have a chance to discover MSU's best-kept secret.

The Sparty Mascot Program is recruiting for a replacement. Applications are open today.

"It's a well-rounded program," said mascot program co-director J.C. Weigelt. "It's open to males and females. You just have to be a creative individual."

Although it is not a paid position, the role of Sparty is exclusive.

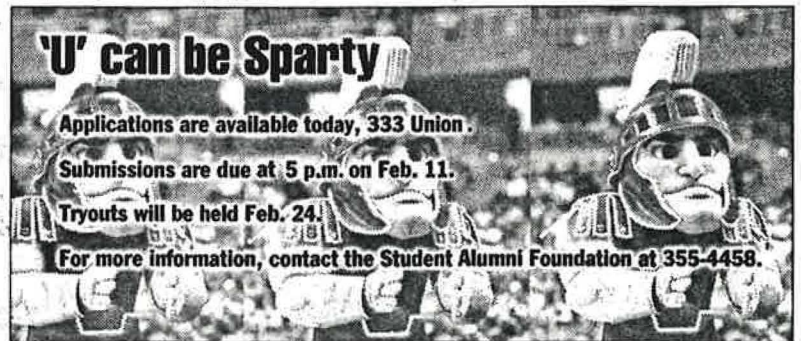
"We are looking for someone who is between 5-foot-10 and 6-foot-2, and obviously spirited," co-director Jason Zicchino said. "You have to bleed green."

But before deciding to audition, students should consider the actual responsibilities and commitments that come with the title of Sparty, Weigelt said.

"We're looking for someone who is friendly, outgoing, and very spontaneous," he said.

Sparty's 7-foot, \$8,000 costume weighs 30 pounds, allowing only enough flexibility for playful gestures and animation. It is also rumored that on a hot day, a spirited individual inside the Sparty costume can lose from three to five pounds.

Obligations for Sparty include promoting MSU athletic events as well as marching in parades, and



Source: Student Alumni Foundation

FARAH DHARSHI/The State News

attending tailgates and private events such as weddings and bar mitzvahs.

Students such as Sara Reichow know a position like Sparty takes hard work and determination.

"I know there's probably a friendly person under there with tons of school spirit," said Reichow, a political science freshman.

Those chosen to be Sparty must commit to a year-long job, with possible chances of repeat employment. They must also attend a five-day Universal Cheerleading Association mascot camp in Milwaukee. There, they will work alongside other college mascots from Ohio, Nebraska and Colorado.

No experience is necessary, but it can be helpful, Weigelt said. Any history involving cheerleading or dance may also be favorable during

auditions.

Once a person is chosen to represent MSU, his or her job begins almost immediately. Weigelt hopes to initiate the new Sparty after spring break.

Anywhere from one to four Sparty applicants will be chosen to represent MSU.

"We aren't really sure yet how many we'll take," Zicchino said. "It depends how many of the people who try out are good."

Applicants must prepare a two-minute dance or animation routine, which must be performed for the judges. There may also be spontaneous requests from judges asking for a specific maneuver or gesture, Zicchino said.

Judges for the contest include members of the board of directors of the Student Alumni Foundation and possibly other MSU officials.

Jan. 26, 2000

MSU - Sparty (statue + emblem) Spartan Guard Corps stand vigil over statue 10-8-75

By CAROL KLOSE
State News Staff Writer
University of Michigan
vandals beware! Lurking
in the MSU shadows with
vengeful vigilance, the
Spartan Guard Corps awaits
you.
The Spartan Guard Corps
is the name of a special
security force protecting

MSU's favorite statue from
a blue and maize bath this
week before the Spartans
meet the Wolverines in
gridiron combat Saturday.
Sponsored by the MSU
Varsity Club, the project is
a response to a request
made two weeks ago by
Burt Smith, athletic direc-
tor at that time.

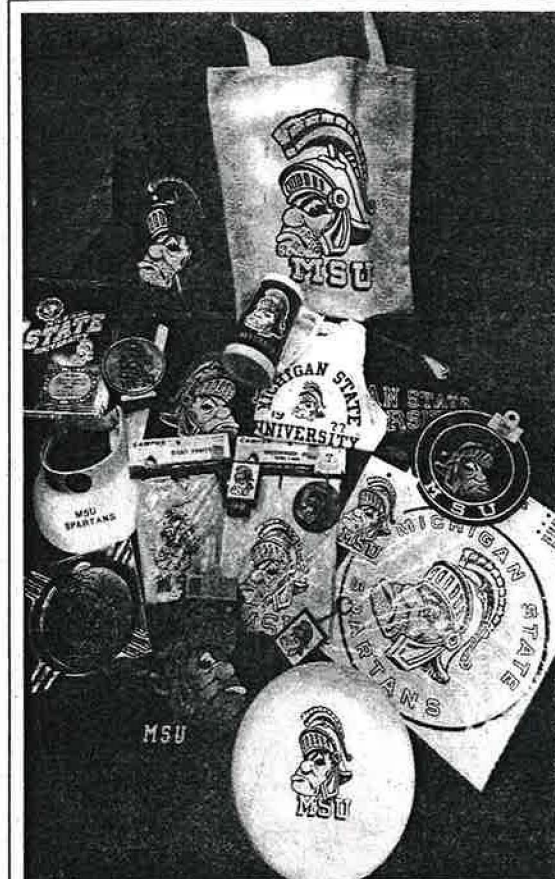
According to campus
maintenance supervisors,
Sparty, the 10 and a half
foot ceramic statue which
reigns over the traffic
circle just north of Demon-
stration Hall, is frequently
vandalized the week pre-
ceding MSU's annual
meet with its archrival.
Last year Sparty's briefs
were painted maize.

"We are guarding Spar-
ty because he's the Spar-
tan ideal. It's insulting and
humiliating to see him
vandalized," said Scott
Evans, vice president of
Varsity Club.
Evans said that the Uni-
versity administration de-
cided that there had been
enough vandalism in the
past to warrant a special
security force for Sparty
and that the Varsity Club
was the logical choice be-
cause they represent ath-
letics.

About 30 to 35 Varsity
Club members are partic-
ipating in the watch.
Three-hour shifts, with
two men per shift, started
Monday night and will
continue through Friday
night.

Members of the club met
with the Dept. of Public
Safety to work out proce-
dures for the watch and
the department has in-
creased the number of
patrols in the area. Evans
hopes the club will be able
to use walkie-talkies to
keep in touch with the
police.

(continued on page 7)



SN photo/Robert Kaye

MSU - Sparty 4-9-76 Instead of close shave, MSU VIKINGAL FILL Sparty will get the ax

By CAROL KLOSE
State News Staff Writer
The MSU housecleaning of athletic
representatives may soon go one step
further with the ax falling this time on
none other than Sparty, the symbol of
MSU athletics.

The Sparty in question is the rather
rough-looking cartoon mug that bedecks
T-shirts, bookstore bags, athletic tickets
and a variety of MSU souvenirs. The
allegations against the stubby-chinned,
fiere-faced symbol include failure to
properly represent the image of MSU
while masquerading as an official symbol.

Robert Perrin, vice president for
University and federal relations, plans to
sponsor a contest to find a new Sparty
symbol that would become the official
University symbol. His office will award
the winning artist a \$100 prize.

Perrin, who said the kindest word he
could find to describe Sparty was "thug,"
feels the grizzled caricature does not
create a positive image for MSU, espe-
cially in light of current athletic
problems.

"This is a time when we must take
conscientious pains to construct a favor-
able image," he said.

The symbol has never been officially
adopted by MSU and no one seems to
know how it originated. Many think it
was created by commercial interests for
use on souvenirs.

Information Services senior graphic
artist Barbara Brown said she did not
think the design was created by her office
and did not know how it originated.

Describing Sparty as a "rough-looking
guy" she said, "The image is not the
greatest."

When asked about the symbol, MSU
Trustee Aubrey Radcliffe, R-Lansing,
responded, "You mean the ugly one with
the beard?"

Radcliffe said he liked the idea of a new
Sparty that represented the intellectual
side of MSU as well as the athletic.

Despite his unofficial status, Sparty,
who resembles the evil Brutus in Popeye
cartoons, has even found his way onto
MSU athletic ticket stubs.

Bill Beardsley, asst. athletic director in
charge of tickets, said his office did not
introduce the design and that it has been
decided that the mug will no longer be
used on tickets.

"It might be good if we had one official
design or insignia," he added.

Sparty appears to be as unpopular with
students as he is with the administration.

"He is sort of tough looking," MSU
football player Dave Steenland said. "I
guess he could use a shave."

Marcia Mannino, a senior, also thought
Sparty looked too unkempt with a beard.

"He looks like a redneck drinking
beer," she said. "We should have some-
one more intellectual-looking."

Details of the contest that will put the
current Sparty on the unemployment
roles will be announced soon, Perrin said,
expressing confidence in the success of
the search for the super-image Sparty.

"I think we can find a symbol that will
reflect our determination and compe-
tence in sports without having Sparty
look like a cretin," he chuckled.

Sparty watch

(continued from page 3)

We would not use violence,
only try to stave off a large
crowd. We would contact the
police who could arrest them or
do whatever is necessary."

Evans said they have re-
ceived threats on Sparty's well-
being and are anticipating a
potential "attack" Friday night.
"We will probably put out a
double shift Friday," he said.
"We anticipate carloads or bus-
loads, not just one or two
people."

The "corps" has developed
quite an involved procedure to
make sure the Spartan symbol
is not defaced. A buddy
system is used where a member
calls the men a half hour before
their shift starts to make sure
they are awake. Evans also
calls the guards then drives by
the statue each shift to make
sure everything is all right. A
guard may not leave his post
until the next shift relieves
him.

"Response has been just
great," Evans said. "Students
passing by immediately know
what's going on. They stop and
talk and we have some great
conversations."

At one point campus police
had to disperse a crowd that
had gathered because bikes
were clogging the street, he
said.

Local businesses have been
providing the guards with
pizzas, coffee and hot chocolate.
A 50-gallon coffee urn at the
site will provide coffee to all
who stop by.

Sparty, up until now, has
spent 20 years watching over
the night-time campus alone.



All over campus, the signs read, "HE'S COMING," and he's finally here. After a three year retirement, Sparty came back to MSU for the first home football game.

Lorae Hamilton, Student Alumni Association adviser and assistant director for the Alumni Association said that the mascot represents pride, academic excellence, and diversity for current, past and future MSU students. But most importantly, Sparty is a real person.

"There isn't a mascot in the country that has a real personality," said Hamilton, "This is a first."

Kathy Lindahl, assistant athletic director, said a lot of time went into the design of the costume. The committee designated to bring back Sparty researched the costume and look of the heroic Spartan figure.

Lindahl stressed that the committee wanted a mascot that was flexible and movable, but not cartoonish. As a result, the costume is a full-bodied—one in which no body part of the person inside shows.

"We never wanted the people to see a difference in the form—we wanted Sparty looking the same from year to year," said Lindahl.

Many drawings were made, as well as two trips to Real Characters, Inc. located in Atlanta, Georgia, where the costume was made. The result can be seen at all football, basketball and hockey games.

The costume, costing \$7000, is made up of foam-like material with a nylon liner on the inside. A fan is located in the helmet giving more

ventilation to the person inside.

What kind of character is the mascot supposed to be? Lindahl said that Sparty is lovable, likable and approachable.

"He's not an athlete and not a cheerleader. He never speaks. His gestures characterize his personality," said Hamilton.

All the moves seen on the field from

SPARTY: What A Character!

by Jennifer Voorhis
photos by Rob Borer

Sparty are improvised.

"The person underneath will develop their own character," Lindahl said.

Hamilton stressed that Sparty represents participation. "He's a representative of MSU the crowd can interact with."

"Sparty opens doors to a representative of MSU that many people don't have the capacity to meet," said Hamilton.

Now comes the question everyone wants to know the answer to...who is inside Sparty?

"It's very important that confidentiality be maintained...when you become public you become very vulnerable," said Hamilton.

Although the name of Sparty is not known, it is given that it is a student.

"We always wanted it to be a student... MSU is for students and it's a great honor to be Sparty," said Lindahl.

There are certain restrictions for the person underneath Sparty. He or she must be at least 5 feet, ten inches tall and be in fairly good shape; up to five pounds can be lost underneath the costume during one football game.

The only available information on the person inside Sparty is that he is a 23- year-old male, majoring in electrical engineering. He views his role as Sparty as fun. "I don't view it as a job," Sparty said.

What does he like best about being Sparty? "You can do anything you want and nobody knows who is behind it! Nobody knows who you are."

Although it is an honor and a lot of fun, Sparty stressed that his role as the MSU mascot is time consuming. "It's like taking an extra five credit class. I spend maybe 15 to 20 hours a week as Sparty."

What can we see in the future from Sparty? Sparty told me that he is going to learn the "Quick Step" with the band, dance with Motion and interact more with the cheerleaders.

"I'll do almost anything to get the crowd going," Sparty said.

After being at a few football games this year, this appears obvious. As soon as Sparty appeared, everyone around me began to smile and cheer, even when MSU was losing against Michigan—and that definitely says something.

To Save A Spartan Repairs Insure Long Future for Statue

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of 11 members of the MSU community, Sparty, the 46-year-old statue, was given the chance to live on.

Jim Cotter, assistant director of admissions, came up with the project idea and with several of his colleagues, formed the Save our Sparty committee. The main goal of this committee was obviously to save Sparty from the damage that had been done after many years of weathering the storm.

"Sparty wouldn't have been able to last much longer," said Jack Siebold, chairman of the committee and director of admissions. "His back leg was terribly damaged by water to the point of falling off. Someone would have been able to pick one of his toes off with a stick!" Sparty also suffered from an acute hole in the shoulder.

Along with renovating Sparty, the island was modified and new lighting was added to give Sparty a more dramatic appearance.

The committee had a mold created of Sparty because, as Siebold put it, "He won't last forever like this." Siebold expects another renovation to be necessary in approximately 50 years. With the new mold, it will be possible for future generations of Spartans to re-do Sparty, perhaps even in bronze.

-by Sandra Bitonti



ABOVE: The Save Our Sparty Committee saved Sparty from years of damage. Along with renovating Sparty, the island on which he stands was modified and new lights were added to give him a more prestigious look.

1990 Red Cedar Log

pg 24-25

**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

April 6, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFERS REWARD FOR LEADS IN SPARTY'S GOLF
CART THEFT**

The MSU Alumni Association is offering a reward for information leading to the arrest of those involved in the theft of Sparty's golf cart April 3.

Sometime between the hours of 9-11 p.m. that night, the iconic mascot's specially designed golf cart was taken from its parking spot near the MSU Union and was dumped in the Red Cedar River near the MSU Computer Center.

Clint Stevens, director of the Sparty Mascot Program, said a \$1,000 reward will be donated to a student-run organization that is selected by the person who submits the information. They also will receive two football tickets to the home game of their choice during the 2016 season. Anonymity is guaranteed and Sparty, himself, will present the check to the selected student-run organization.



**University
Advancement**

**MSU Alumni
Association**

Scott Westerman
Associate Vice President
for Alumni Relations
Executive Director,
Alumni Association

Spartan Way
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"The Spartans Will Global Day of Service is just around the corner," Stevens said, referring to the association-sponsored worldwide service event, set for April 16. "We hope to encourage a witness to come forward in the spirit of service to our student body."

Alumni Association Executive Director Scott Westerman said the vehicle suffered serious water damage and will have to be replaced.

"The Sparty program is self-sustaining," he said. "With over 500 appearances in a given year, the golf cart is essential to Sparty's ability to spread the Spartan Spirit across campus."

Persons with information regarding the incident are encouraged to contact Detective Chad Davis with the Michigan State University Police Department at (517) 355-2226 or at davisc@police.msu.edu.

Reward offered in Sparty golf cart heist

LSJ

Kathleen Lavey and Ken Palmer 8:42 p.m. EDT April 6, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy of MSU Police)

EAST LANSING - If you think the Great Sparty Golf Cart Heist is a no big deal, think again.

The Michigan State University Alumni Association said it will pay a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of whoever stole the cart from its parking spot near the Student Union on Sunday night, according to a news release posted on the MSU Police Department's website.

"The Spartans Will Global Day of Service is just around the corner," Sparty Mascot Program Director Clint Stevens said in the release. "We hope to encourage a witness to come forward in the spirit of service to our student body."

MSU police said the green-and-white cart was discovered missing about 11 p.m. Sunday and reported stolen about 12:35 a.m. Monday. It was found Tuesday in the Red Cedar River near the Computer Center, they said.

"Dear Sparty, we found your whip," read a post of the submerged vehicle on the [MSU Police Department's Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/msupolice/photos/a.345758012131427.81741.151859288187968/1164885923551961/?type=3&theater\)](https://www.facebook.com/msupolice/photos/a.345758012131427.81741.151859288187968/1164885923551961/?type=3&theater), prompting comments such as this one: "I think it was Brutus the Buckeye. He had an axe to grind" and "Witnesses say they saw a wolverine leaving the scene of the crime."

Joking aside, the alumni group said the cart suffered serious water damage and is a total loss.

It's offering to pay \$1,000 to a student-run organization chosen by the person who provides information leading to an arrest in the golf cart caper. The tipster also will get two tickets to any home football game during the 2016 season, it said.

Tipsters will remain anonymous, and Sparty will personally present the check to the chosen student group.

"The Sparty program is self-sustaining," the alumni group's director, Scott Westerman, said in the news release. "With over 500 appearances in a given year, the golf cart is essential to Sparty's ability to spread the Spartan Spirit across campus."

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Detective Chad Davis at 355-2226 or drop him a note at davisc@police.msu.edu.

And this is why I have trust issues... <https://t.co/xcpjigximx> (<https://t.co/xcpjigximx>)
— Sparty (@TheRealSparty) April 4, 2016 (<https://twitter.com/TheRealSparty/status/7117027819709136896>)

Contact Kathleen Lavey at (517) 377-1251 or klavey@lsj.com. Follow her on Twitter @kathleenlavey

Read or Share this story: <http://on.lsj.com/1RXQicb>



10XL.
HELMET SIZE

8
NUMBER
OF FINGERS

Spartan by the NUMB3RS

SHOE SIZE
22

350.
AVERAGE ANNUAL
APPEARANCES

3

Number of times
he's been named
National Mascot of the Year
by the Universal
Cheerleaders Association

RTY

MSU'S MASCOT SPRANG TO LIFE IN 1955 AND HIS POPULARITY HAS SOARED EVER SINCE.

BUT AS YOU KNOW, SPARTY'S ALWAYS PRIDED HIMSELF ON BEING A MAN OF FEW WORDS. WE RECENTLY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM BETWEEN APPEARANCES AND HE GRACIOUSLY TOOK TIME OUT TO ANSWER A FEW OF HIS FANS' BURNING QUESTIONS.

Look Who's Talking:

Q: How does a big guy like you get around campus?

A: My driver takes me places in my personalized golf cart.

Q: How do you keep so fit?

A: I frequently practice with our cheerleading and dance teams.

Q: Do you have a favorite exercise?

A: My specialty is one-arm pushups.

Q: You're always so fashion forward. How do you manage that?

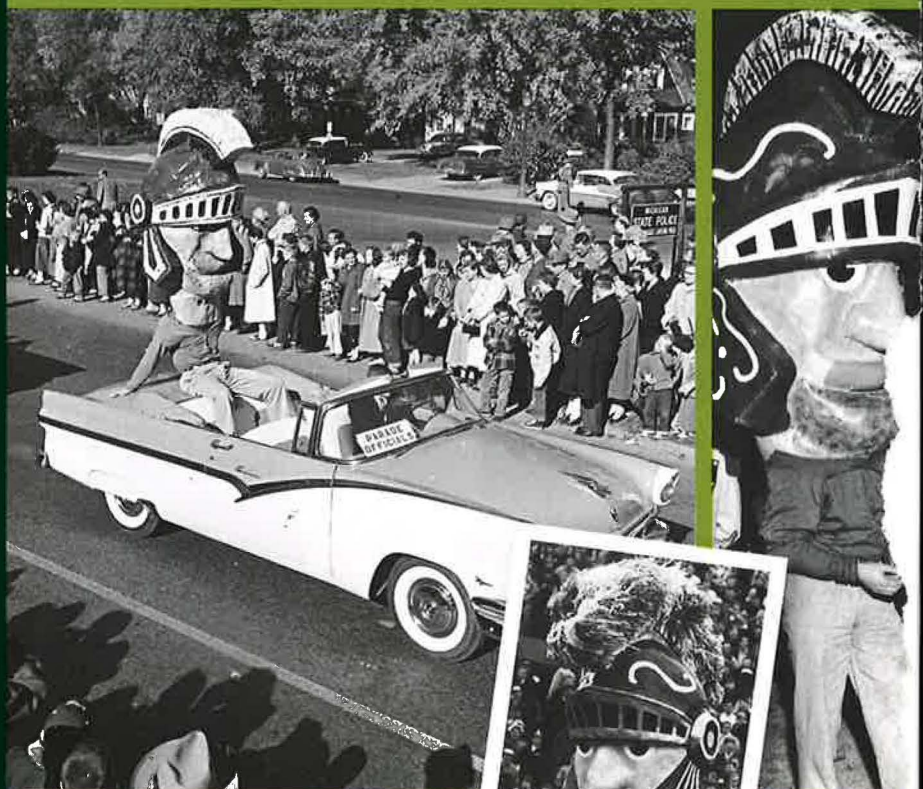
A: My recent wardrobe updates were made possible by online contributions from more than 324 fans.

Q: Where do you like to hang out on campus?

A: In front of our two Spartan statues.

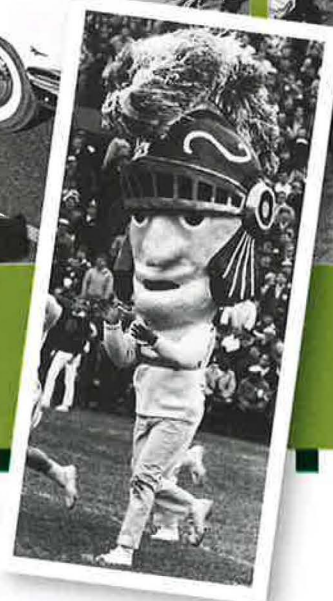
TAKE A PEEK UNDER T

HE'S BEEN CROWNED NATIONAL MASCOT OF THE YEAR THREE TIMES BY THE UNIVERSAL CHEERLEADERS ASSOCIATION. MUSCLE & FITNESS MAGAZINE TWICE CALLED HIM ITS "BUFFEST MASCOT." HE'S SPARTY, **OUR BIG GREEN MAN** ON CAMPUS.



PUT THE TOP DOWN • Sparty at a homecoming parade.

Smiling Sparty reigned from 1959-1984.



A towering seven feet tall, Sparty evokes ancient Greek fighters. He's decked out in body armor and ready for battle. His helmet, however, resembles those worn by ancient Roman warriors.

Though tough on the outside, he's a big softy at heart. His boundless energy, crowd-pleasing personality and love of the limelight may make him more recognizable than MSU's Tom Izzo or Mark Dantonio, the

respective basketball and football coaches.

You've probably spotted him dancing and cheering on the sidelines at MSU athletic events. Perhaps he's even posed with you for a photograph. In addition to cheering at all major MSU athletic events, he spreads smiles and good will with regular visits to hospitals, daycare centers, schools, fairs, parades and alumni events—with more than 300 appearances each

year. And believe it or not, he's appeared at hundreds of weddings and even one funeral.

The big guy debuted in 1955, courtesy of the Theta Xi fraternity. Back then, he was a primitive 60-pound, six-foot-high papier-mâché head that slipped over a sturdy set of shoulders.

In 1984, the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity introduced the unshaven look of "Gruff" Sparty, still popular among many fans.

The Association of Future Alumni, a student group, keeps the warrior up and running. The group led a \$15,000 crowd-funding effort to get Sparty new body armor and epaulettes, revealed last fall.

MSU co-eds try out for the coveted job of being Sparty each fall. Those chosen must agree to keep their identities secret for two years after graduation. Today, 54 recent Sparty Alumni are scattered across the country.

THE HELMET OF MSU'S TIRELESS MASCOT



BACK IN THE DAY - Sparty and the football team stop in Las Vegas on the way to the 1956 Rose Bowl.



Matt Mitchell / MSU Athletic Communications



[youtube.com/user/TheRealSparty](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheRealSparty)

TRADITION KEEPERS - Last fall, 45 of 54 of the former students who have recently embodied Sparty reunited at their five-year reunion. Football fans cheered their eternal Sparty spark.

This fall, an impressive 45 of them made it back to campus for their regular five-year reunion.

The MSUAA oversees the Sparty program. It runs completely on grants and donations.



For more information on Sparty and his availability, contact Janel Rutzen at (517) 432-0014 or send an email to sprtyrequ@msu.edu.



futurealumni.msu.edu/sparty

UNFORGETTABLE SPARTAN MEMORIES

One of my favorite moments in costume: (At a celebrity golf outing)...I decided to take a shot at the green (on a par 3). I lined up a shot and swung as best as I could, and while I was trying to see where it went, Tom Izzo turns to me and said "Holy shit, Sparty. You just hit the green."

Michael Thompson was Sparty from 2007-2009

My most memorable event was a visit to the DeVos Children's Hospital visiting terminal children. It was amazing to see the joy that we could bring to families and children in dire situations. One little boy in particular, mustered all the strength he could to raise his hand for a high-five. It brought me to tears in suit.

Jack Vigneron was Sparty from 2007-2011

I had just done the President's Brunch in the Breslin Center and was heading back to the changing room before the game. A person comes up to me and asks if I would stop by a private party just down the hall...I nodded and walked into the room, where I discovered Mohammed Ali and his family relaxing before tipoff! While people were taking photos, the Champ leaned in and told me "You look good, but I'm prettier." Never will forget that.

Jack Dye was Sparty from 1999-2001

original date

1 Aug. 21, 2002 — Inside Sparty's **Third Reich Roots**

PUBLICATION: Lansing City Pulse (MI)

SECTION: 15th Anniversary Issue

DATE: August 17, 2016 (excerpt)

New eyes often tell a new story, and that was the case with this one. Daniel Sturm showed up one day at our original office in Old Town and introduced himself as a German journalist in our midst because his American wife was studying at Michigan State University. We took him on, and for the next couple of years, City Pulse looked at the world through his European eyes. Here he tells an unsettling story about one of Michigan's icons.

He is without question the most popular figure on Michigan State University's campus: the Spartan, better known as "Sparty," a three-ton, 11-foot-high colossus. You can find his face on cups, sweatshirts and jackets, and meet him in person as a full-bodied mascot at MSU celebrations and football games. Since he was erected in 1945, university officials proudly call him the largest freestanding ceramic figure in the world. Today, green-and-white clad students guard Sparty through the night on the eve of the MSU-UM game, and devoted alumni praise him with religious fervor.

At first glance, the stone-faced MSU symbol impressed me as a Rambo-like warrior, with oversized muscles and a shocking emptiness of expression. Hadn't ancient Sparta been a state system, which intentionally raised children as war machines? And weren't the Spartans reputed as intellectually and artistically barren, since they limited reading and writing to an absolute minimum? Strangely, Sparty reminded me of the artwork of Nazi Germany, back when "Aryan" race body aesthetics were celebrated. Where did this guy come from?

...

In the middle of the World War II, sculptor Leonard D. Jungwirth, an MSU assistant professor, decided to create a statue of "The Spartan." Jungwirth was born in Detroit in 1903, the son of an Austrian wood-carver and modeler who had immigrated to America in 1882. His mother was born in Germany. And he studied in Germany during the rise of Adolf Hitler.

It remains unclear why Jungwirth sacrificed three years of his spare time to create Sparty without receiving any apparent compensation. Jungwirth's oldest daughter, Sandra Ayers, who lives in DeWitt, said that her father hadn't been a big sports fan. She also remembers that he didn't believe the statue was his greatest work of art. He often told her, "I hope I don't get to be known as the creator of Sparty when I die." But when he died in 1963, that is exactly what happened. Ayers believes her father's stay in Germany from 1929 to 1933 had an influence on his artwork. He'd told her about running into SA troops and about the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, whom he'd seen on two occasions. She told City Pulse about a Nazi knife he'd brought back from Germany. "He told me it had dried blood on it, but I don't know if it did. I guess it was rusty."

In 1929, Jungwirth attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. As Jungwirth arrived, [Nazis] had just started to rally in the city, which they would later call "Capital of the Movement." A 1996 MSU exhibition about Sparty and the Figurative Tradition in Sculpture acknowledges that "Jungwirth's Munich years may have been significant in the development of his idea of 'The Spartan.'"

...

The Nazis considered certain kinds of nakedness, including people with war injuries, physical handicaps, or in the process of lovemaking, "degenerate" and banned from exhibitions. The skin had to be hairless, smooth, and bronzed. The body had become an abstract symbol of Aryan beauty, as it was in Leni Riefenstahl's film of the 1936 Olympic Games.

Jungwirth might have been at least unwittingly influenced by this style. Sparty stands, invincible, at the intersection of Kalamazoo Street and Red Cedar and Chestnut roads, a figure to be worshipped, but neither desired nor loved.

Inside the life of Sparty: ex-MSU mascot tells all

[Brad Emons](#), hometownlife.com Published 2:47 a.m. ET May 23, 2017 | Updated 4 hours ago

Novi High grad Halley had a blast during his three-year reign



(Photo: SUBMITTED PHOTO)

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Harrison Halley's true identity can now be revealed.

The 2013 Novi High grad secretly spent the past three years as Michigan State's official mascot, better known as Sparty.

Halley, who recently graduated from MSU with a degree in communications and music, checked off all the boxes, and more, on his personal bucket list.

He appeared on "Good Morning America" and as Halley said, "That was cool getting to know Ryan Seacrest, I took some pictures with him."

Or how about that commercial shoot with late night TV host Jimmy Kimmel?

"I was with Ken Jeong from the movie "The Hangover," singer Robin Thicke, and the guy from Men's Wearhouse who says, 'You're going to like the way you look, I guarantee it.' For a commercial he measures me as Sparty," Halley said.

More MSU stories

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[MSU softball: What a difference 5 years makes](#)

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Of course, there was an appearance on ESPN's "Game Day for College Football" on the MSU campus where he met the anchors Kirk Herbstreit, Lee Corso and Chris Fowler, not to mention his numerous trips representing Sparty at games around the country.

In one year, Sparty will make over 500 appearances, including "football, basketball, pretty much every sport, hockey, volleyball, tennis matches," according to Halley.

Busy schedule

"Summer is our busiest season, so I was all over the state of Michigan," Halley said. "Got to go to L.A. a couple of times, Pebble Beach, shot commercial shoots with ESPN in L.A. with people like Jimmy Kimmel and some other big stars. Been to New York a couple of times, been to a bunch of different Big Ten football stadiums. Whenever the football team travels, I'd travel. We don't travel with the basketball team unless it's at a tournament. I went to Madison Square Garden to watch the Michigan State basketball team play. We go all over the country. Arizona, Las Vegas."

Check, check, check all the boxes . . . but only problem is that he had to retain his anonymity for three years.

"What was difficult is that although you're always meeting these people, you're in the suit the whole time and you can't get the picture with just yourself, you're a Sparty," Halley said. "But It was still awesome to see them and get to talk to them."

And while Halley had a blast during his three-year stint, there was another major drawback.

"If it's a 75-degree day, then add 30 degrees, it's about 105 in the suit," Halley said. "It weighs about 30 pounds. You sweat a lot. Every single time you're getting out basically you're dying. Like for weddings or stuff when you're constantly dancing on the dance floor, you pretty much push yourself to the point of overheating and exhaustion every single time."

Job hazards

It was an appearance during an on-campus event called Sparty's Bar Mitzvah that Halley would like to forget while wearing the stylized Greek athlete/warrior costume.

"It was for the Jewish groups on campus and there were so many people packed into this one venue and everybody was dancing," Halley recalled. "By 30 minutes I was crawling literally from booth to booth trying to catch my breath to get some sort of breather. It was so hot with the amount of people and the body heat that was being put off. By the end of the hour I literally had to be carried back to where I was changing. I was so dead."

But whether it's a campus or off-campus activity, Sparty had to retain his core values throughout his term.

"You've got to do it to keep the character," Halley said. "Sparty can't be dead or like lazy, or not animated, so you have to keep going until the end of the hour. But for that reason we only do hour appearances. The longest we can be in is an hour. If you want to be in longer than an hour then you have to pay for two events."

Halley did numerous community events, including 5K races, birthday parties, fundraisers, weddings and hospital visits.

"We literally do everything," Halley said. "There's a wide arrange of things that we do besides sports, which is 10 percent of the job and the rest of it is in the community."

Sparty is an unpaid volunteer position, but it does have its perks.

Always on call

"As long as there is a Spartan and they're willing pay for us to go out and sponsor us, we'll make the trip," Halley said. "The only compensation that we get is that we'll get some free MSU gear so we'll look official on the sidelines. Its strictly voluntary, so people don't do it for the wrong reasons. So you don't get kids (students) say, 'I get paid to be Sparty.' It's to get the right candidates to do it for the right reasons."

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Halley seemed destined to be Sparty coming out of Novi High where he excelled in music and was a member of the marching band. He was also voted Homecoming King, participated in two sports (skiing and tennis), acted and served in student government. He also learned to unicycle.

He joined the MSU marching band as a freshman. He also was a member of the Spartan Discords serving as its a cappella director for two years. Halley is also an accomplished piano and saxophone player.

And while he was a member of the MSU marching band, he got the idea that he'd like to give Sparty a shot.

Aces the test

"They have tryouts every year and I contacted someone who was involved with the program and kind of shadowed for a little bit," Halley said.

In early 2015, Halley went through the tryout process and made the final cut.

"It's pretty rigorous," he said. "Went through a couple of interviews, couple of physical activities, then you finally actually get in and they'll tell you to do things, live improv, games, and see how you react. Found out in about March that I made it on."

One of the job requirements is to interact with the opposing school's mascots, put on show, while upholding your school's pride.

"Sparty . . . he's always the best," Halley said. "When he's faced with another mascot Sparty is always on top so whether it's a push-up contest or a dance off, Sparty is always the one that's going to come out on top. Between mascots you kind of know there's going to be competition, but in the end you know it's going to be playful. We're never going to get too heated because there (are) rivalries between schools, but you can't have mascots seen punching each other. But in the end of the day you know it's a friendly competition and we all love each other. I know the mascot from OSU, Minnesota, Wisconsin . . . pretty much every mascot in the Big Ten, we're great friends. We only meet a few times so we share this thing in common."

And if there was a favorite athletic moment for Halley, it came on Oct. 17, 2015, at Michigan Stadium when MSU stunned the host Wolverines, 27-23, on Jalen Watts-Jackson's 38-yard fumble return on the final play of the game.

Signature game

"Everybody lost all hope, but once that play happened, it was just how crazy the stadium erupted and the feeling on the field with the players and all the cheerleaders, and the band," Halley said. "And getting to go back to the locker room with the team and celebrate was probably was the best celebration we had, or that I got to be a part of as the mascot."

Despite all the weekends, hours and events, Halley wouldn't have changed anything.

"It was great and I'm glad that I did it," he said. "And really seeing the people's smiles that have never seen Sparty or you'll get seniors coming up to you and saying, 'I've been here four years and was never able to get a picture with you, can I take a picture?' Everyone from older to younger generations you're really the grand ambassador for Michigan State. It really makes it worthwhile when you're literally like a celebrity from a time when you're in the suit and being Sparty."

Young children, meanwhile, seemed to be the most mesmerized during their encounters.

"You'll get babies that are so fascinated with you or they just cry immensely at the sight of you," Halley said. "You'll get the ages where they either know you're the guy in the suit or they'll still believe you're Sparty. It's fun to see how kids react to Sparty."

Passing the torch

Halley recently moved to Chicago and is interviewing for jobs. He wants to continue to pursue his musical endeavors, whether it's playing piano for a church or for a choir, or teaching piano lessons.

He's entertained thoughts of working at Disney "and being one of those guys, like Mickey or Goofy,"

"We'll see what happens," Halley said. "Maybe do it a year or two and just have fun."

But the memories Halley has as Sparty he'll cherish forever, including one campus event where he took center stage with MSU basketball coach Tom Izzo and school president Lou Anna K. Simon.

"Coach Izzo waited and talked with me," Halley said. "It was the three biggest faces of MSU in the same room. That was pretty cool."

"You're literally a celebrity on campus. You'll never see more people smile, get high-fives or hugs from anybody. The opportunities that I had and the things that I was able to do I would have never been able to do if I wasn't Sparty."

And now it's time for Halley to pass the torch to the next Sparty, who will remain anonymous for the coming year.

"I couldn't tell anybody that I was Sparty until I graduated," Halley said. "A quote I like is, 'It wasn't kept from you, it was kept for you.' It's like, I'm not keeping the secret because I want to from someone, I'm keeping it because the magic of Sparty is going to be there when they see Sparty. It's not like, 'Oh, that's Harrison,' it's not Sparty. It was an awesome thing to be a part of the last three years."

bemons@hometownlife.com

Local&State



George Scofes, right, with his son, Steve, explains his family's role in helping shape Michigan State into the Spartans. PHOTOS BY GANNON BURGETT/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL AND RICK OSENTOSKI/USA TODAY SPORTS

Pot-spiked beer would be banned under bill

Kathleen Gray
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

LANSING — People who are hoping for an extra kick from the beer they order in the future will be sadly disappointed about a bill proposed in the state Senate this week.

Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, introduced a bill that would ban the sale of marijuana-infused beers in Michigan, whether the pint was alcoholic or nonalcoholic.

"I've been studying the problems that have been created in Colorado following the legalization of marijuana," he said. "And marijuana-infused beer is a recipe for disaster."

Colorado is the only state that allows for marijuana-infused beer, but it's only a nonalcoholic version made by the inventor of the popular Blue Moon beer.

Jones is worried about the possibility of mixing beer and marijuana because edible forms of cannabis affect people differently and take different amounts of time to take effect.

"Bartenders are required right now to judge how much a patron has had to drink. It's hard enough to do with alcohol without adding in THC," he said, referring to the active ingredient in marijuana that provides the "high" that many cannabis users are seeking. "The other element — you can drive with a small amount of alcohol in your system, but you can't drive with any level of THC. There is zero tolerance."

So if a bar is serving pot-spiked beer, it could be held liable if the patron drives away from the bar, he said.

Michigan voters approved medical marijuana in 2008 and could consider a ballot proposal to fully legalize marijuana for adult recreational use during the Nov. 6 general election.

There is a wide variety of marijuana-infused edible products on the market, including gummies, baked goods, juices, gum, even dog treats. There are some marijuana-infused craft beers that contain cannabidiol for flavor, but not the THC.

Under Jones' bill — SB 969 — no part of the marijuana plant could be infused into beer for sale in Michigan.

HOW SPARTY GOT HIS NAME



Judy Putnam
Columnist
Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK — MICHIGAN

LANSING — If not for the influence of a Greek immigrant family in Lansing, Michigan State University fans might be stuck with a clunker of a nickname: The Staters.

Imagine trying to fire up about a name that rhymes with "Taters." Woo-hoo. The issue dates back to 1925, when the college's name changed from Michigan Agricultural College to Michigan State College. A new nickname was needed to replace the "Aggies" and the public was asked to submit suggestions.

The winning entry was judged by a group on campus in March of 1926. Staters beat Bearcats, Statesmen, Bob Cats, Pioneers and, drumroll please, the Fawns.

The choice of Staters immediately ran into a stacked defense. George Alderton, the Lansing State Journal sports editor from 1923 to 1962, disliked the nickname and refused to use it in the sports pages of the Journal.

Alderton is frequently credited with replacing Michigan Staters with the Spartans. But he got the idea from his friend, Stephen Scofes, according to the Scofes family.



See SPARTY, Page 15A

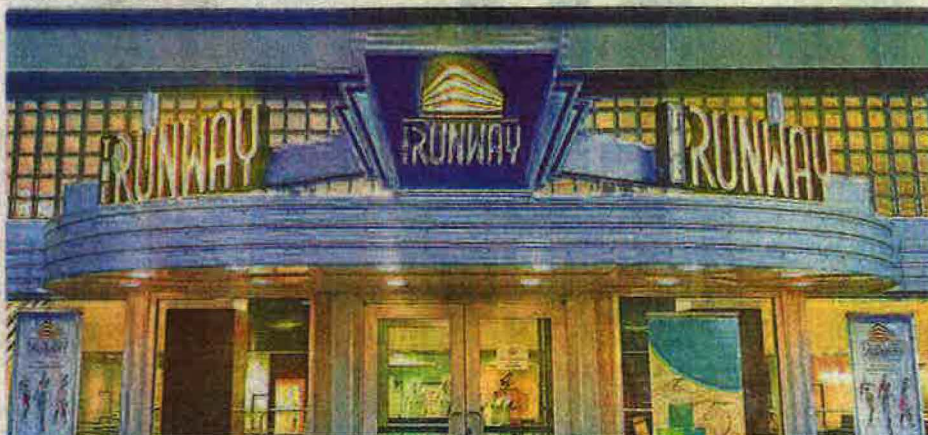
The Runway will leave Knapp's Centre by July

Haley Hansen
Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK — MICHIGAN

LANSING — The Runway, a fashion incubator in the Knapp's Centre, will leave its downtown space this summer after a nearly four-year run and shift to a

and become a "virtual accelerator." This fall, it will launch "Accelerating the Runway," an eight-week course that connects fashion entrepreneurs with experts and mentors.

The decision to leave the physical space downtown was driven by finances and the needs of the organiza-



Sparty

Continued from Page 13A

Three generations

I first heard the story from Steve Scofes, 57, a Lansing-based lobbyist who heard the story from his father, George, now 89, of Okemos. It had been passed down from Steve Scofes' grandfather, Stephen Scofes, who died in 1972, and his brothers, Peter and Nick.

The Scofes brothers were all born near Sparta, Greece but immigrated to America. They ran a restaurant in Lansing called The Coffee Cup in the 1920s and were friends with Alderton.

In 1931, they opened the Famous Grill, a restaurant that became known for its fried chicken from a franchise called "Chicken in the Rough." The restaurant became a hub for Spartan athletic banquets and events for a few decades. Two Spartan athletic awards are named for the Scofes family.

George Scofes said his father told him that Alderton came in for breakfast one day to discuss the name for the Michigan State teams.

"He showed him all the names. One of the names people wanted was the Stagers. That didn't go very well," George Scofes said.

Stephen Scofes had already suggested a better name: The Spartans.

"My dad said to him, 'George (Alderton) I sent you a letter to name them the Spartans. The Spartans were warriors,'" George Scofes said.

Alderton soon launched the idea for the Spartans but didn't credit Scofes.

Spartan name unveiled

On April 13, 1926, he wrote: "Out of a clear sky a nick name has descended upon the Michigan State college athletic camp. 'Spartans' is the sobriquet that will ... be attached to the wearer of the Green and White in the field of intercollegiate sports competition."

He then went on to write about the ancient Spartans' athletic prowess and courage.

A rival newspaper, Lansing Capitol News, also picked up on it and the name stuck.

The family has no doubt about the origin. The Coffee Cup offered a perfect place to discuss the name.

"Who else was in this town in the late



Scofes Restaurant & Lounge in 1967 was located at 2609 S. Cedar St. It closed in 1988 after more than 20 years in business.

LANSING STATE JOURNAL FILE PHOTO



Photos of past presidents and iconic figures sit on a shelf in the conference room of the office of Steve Scofes. GANNON BURGETT/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

'20s who were born and raised in Sparta, Greece who had a restaurant?" Steve Scofes asked.

A 2008 history of the Spartans does name the Scofes family, and its influence on Alderton. And MSU honored George Scofes at halftime of an MSU football game in 2013 with a video recreation of how Sparty got his name.

Besides being the son of the man who named the Spartans, George Scofes has had a fascinating life. Though he was born in Indiana and was an American citizen, he grew up in Greece, raised by his grandparents in a village near Sparta after his mother died from tuberculosis. His father was working in the U.S. but George was trapped in Greece by WWII.

After the war, George Scofes strug-

gled to leave Greece to join his father in Lansing.

He recalled having his life threatened if he didn't give up his American citizenship and join the Communist Party. He said he walked for four nights, hiding in the daylight, to reach Athens and get on a boat.

He arrived at age 17 and started working in the Famous Grill with his dad and uncles. He attended grade school to learn English then Eastern High School and finally Michigan State, earning a degree in hotel and restaurant management.

Scofes Restaurant on Cedar

After a stint in the Air Force, Scofes

worked for the state running the food service system for prisoners in Jackson for a decade before he opened his own restaurant, Scofes Restaurant, on Cedar Street. He operated the restaurant for some 20 years, closing it when Cedar Street was widened in 1988.

He was also part owner of Dooley's bar in East Lansing, now Harper's, and was responsible for booking a then-unknown Irish band called U2 in 1981 to play at the bar.

Another piece of Scofes family history is that Stephen Scofes once owned half of the NFL franchise the Hammond Professionals in the 1920s. Olympian Jim Thorpe played for the team. Scofes and his partner bought it for \$500 and sold it for \$1,000. The franchise eventually became the Detroit Lions.

And the decades of ties between the Scofes family and Spartans hasn't waned.

George Scofes said he's been disappointed in the university's handling of the Larry Nassar scandal but he remains a fan.

"Up until this happened, I think they were riding high and dry," he said. "They'll overcome it eventually. It's going to take a few years."

Steve Scofes said he also remains a Spartan loyalist.

"My father brought my sister (Katina Dart of Okemos) and I up to be loyal. We'll remain loyal. At the end of the day, MSU, the University of Michigan and the other universities are important to the state," he said.

Judy Putnam is a columnist with the Lansing State Journal. Contact her at (517) 267-1304 or at jputnam@lsj.com.

Michigan State News

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Government's Job

Editor's Note: A large number of letters to the editor prompted The State News, after careful consideration, to take the stand printed below. We would like to point out, however, that The State News was NOT the instigator of the idea of a mascot for MSC. A letter to the editor started the ball rolling.

There has been much talk of late on the prospect of a mascot for MSC. Judging from the letters to the editor and talk going about campus, there appears to be considerable interest in the issue. The controversy seems to have settled right now on the dispute over whether or not we should have a cow for a mascot.

People are asking what became of "Sparty Boy" (the calf scheduled to be paraded at the Marquette football game). Others wish he had never been mentioned.

The basic issue is not whether MSC should have a cow for a mascot, but whether or not MSC should have a mascot at all.

If the students at Michigan State College sincerely want to have a mascot, whether it be a cow, a peacock, or a Spartan, we certainly feel they should have one.

The first question, of course, is: Do the students want a mascot? The second: How can we find out whether they want one? We must answer the second before we can get to the first.

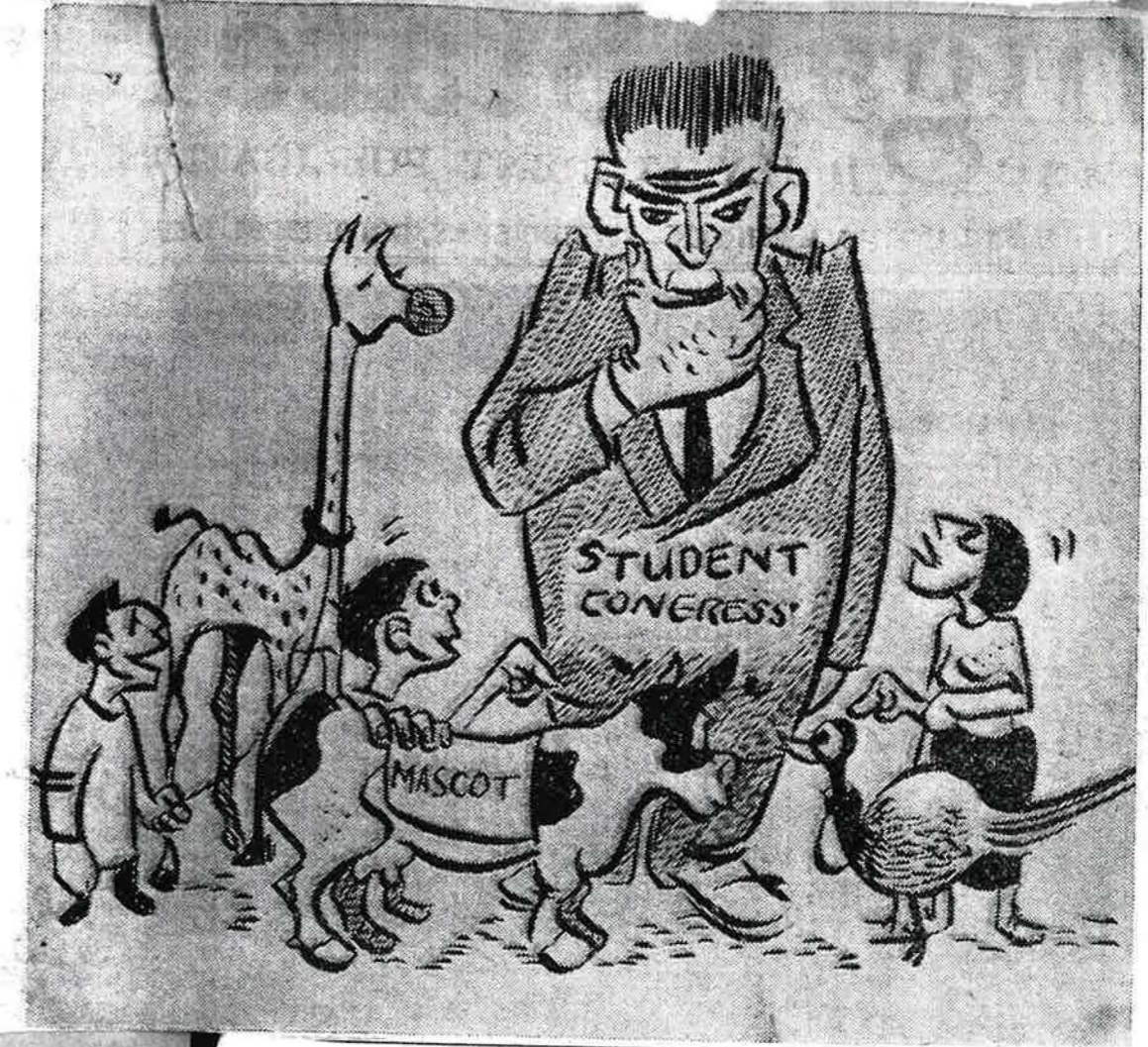
Our suggestion is that if students really want a mascot, they should go to their Student Government representatives, tell them they want a mascot, and tell the representatives to do something about it.

If enough constituents harrass enough representatives and it becomes evident that there is sufficient interest in the question, we believe the Student Government will put it up before a student vote. Then and then only, will we know whether MSC students really want a mascot.

If you want a mascot, tell your representative. Get behind him, push him, and see that he does something about it.

This can also be a test to see how well represented the students are in the Student Government and whether the Government on hearing from its constituents, will take action.

If the students want a cow for a mascot, let's have one. But let's find out first if we really want one.



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The annual income of organized crime was estimated at 10-30 billion dollars a year by Sen. Kefauver. "This means," he stressed, "that the public pays the bill through undeclared taxes. You may think that your small town is 'clean,' but organized crime in large cities

Secret identity of MSU's Original Sparty finally revealed after 30 years

Tresa Baldas, Detroit Free Press Published 11:42 a.m. ET April 9, 2019

MINNEAPOLIS – Long before there was Sparty the bulky mascot, there was Sparty the papier-mache head. A fiberglass noggin followed.

Then Michigan State University got legit.

In 1989, a full-body foam and rubber warrior with bulging muscles, ripped abs and cartoonish face was born — and an unknown engineering student became the first official Sparty. His name was never disclosed.

Thirty years later, we found him (<https://www.freep.com/story/sports/college/michigan-state/spartans/2019/04/09/michigan-state-original-sparty/3397717002/>).

Dave Russell, 55, a businessman from Hastings who flew to the Final Four in his own company plane, was roaming the concourse of U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis waiting to see the Spartans play on Saturday. He was with two women donning green and white when the Detroit Free Press randomly stopped them to conduct fan interviews.

When asked what their ties to MSU were, Russell's girlfriend, Jennifer Reiter Agard said: "He's the Original Sparty!"

INSIDE UVA'S CELEBRATION:From heartbreak to euphoria (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaab/2019/04/09/virginia-ncaa-championship-celebration-final-four/3408625002/>)

UVA'S REDEMPTION STORY:Now complete after (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/nancy-armour/2019/04/08/ncaa-championship-virginia-finds-redemption-beating-texas-tech/3405765002/>)title-game (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/nancy-armour/2019/04/08/ncaa-championship-virginia-finds-redemption-beating-texas-tech/3405765002/>) win (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/nancy-armour/2019/04/08/ncaa-championship-virginia-finds-redemption-beating-texas-tech/3405765002/>)

More: Fun Facts about MSU's Sparty — America's No. 1 college mascot (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2019/04/09/fun-facts-msus-sparty-3-time-national-mascot-year-winner/3405084002/>)

The Original Sparty 1989



Russell smiled and shrugged, then shared his story.

In 1989, while working at the athletic ticket office at MSU, university officials approached him about a new mascot gig. A snazzy new mascot outfit had been designed, and MSU needed someone to fill it.

There were no applications. There was no competition. There was just 6-foot-tall Russell, who played basketball with one of the Bring-Back-Sparty committee members.

"They just asked me if I wanted to do it," Russell recalled. "So that's how I became Sparty. ... Nobody knew."

After Russell said yes, MSU flew him to Atlanta to be fitted for his new getup, which included a vinyl warrior breastplate, Greek-style skirt and giant head. And boy did he sweat.

"It was very hot. I'd lose about 10 pounds every time I was in the costume. I really did," he said, noting he worked through the whole game with refresh breaks in between the quarters.

Then there was the secrecy thing.



Out of his Sparty costume, Dave Russell poses with his Spartan football roommates during the 1989 Aloha Bowl. Pictured left to right: Dave Russell, MSU punter Josh Butland, MSU kicker John Langloh. (Photo: Dave Russell)

Russell couldn't tell anyone about his Sparty gig for a year, though he couldn't keep it from his roommates: MSU football punter Josh Butland and kicker John Langloh.

And his parents, of course. He still laughs at his dad's reaction when he told him he was going to be Sparty the mascot.

"He said, 'What are you going to do with that? How's that going to help you get a degree?'" Russell recalled.

Before he knew it, Russell became a cheerleader. The carefree, electrical engineering student who partied with his football buddies in their East Lansing house — "we just lived on the edge a little" is how he jokingly put it — went to cheerleading camp.

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MSU sent him to Tennessee, where he met up with 121 other college mascots.

"It was a whole different experience," he said. "They taught you how to be crazy and do your thing."

On Sept. 6, 1989, it was showtime. Russell, the Original Sparty, made his debut at Spartan Stadium, entering the field in a white, Chevrolet sedan convertible to the raucous roar of cheering fans.

"Let's hear it for Sparty," the announcer belted over the intercom. "Welcome Home, Big Guy!"

Sparty helps kids

Russell took it all in, and loved it. He is especially fond of a trip he made to Hawaii for the 1989 Aloha Bowl. He and then-head football coach George Perles went to the Naval Academy Children's Hospital, where he visited a terminally ill girl who was about 12 years old.

The memory of them walking into her room, he said, still brings tears.

"She just instantly perked up. She sat up in her bed and took pictures with us," Russell recalled. "That was my most memorable moment. ... It was amazing."



Dave Russell, 55, of Hastings, posing in his Sparty outfit for the first time during a fitting in 1989 in Atlanta. (Photo: Dave Russell)

Other than his family and a few friends, Russell hasn't told many people about his Sparty experience. Though "very proud" that he was the first Sparty, he's not the boastful type, and he doesn't want to come off as a bragger. He has his two daughters for that, Paiton, 14, and Paxton, 12.

"They love telling people," he said, laughing.

Since his debut three decades ago, Sparty has earned bragging rights. He has been voted the best Big Ten mascot by ESPN, crowned the national champion mascot three times by the Universal Cheer Association, and named the "Buffest Mascot" by Muscle and Fitness Magazine.

'Jud changed my life'

MSU officials confirmed for the Free Press that university records show that Dave Russell, an engineering student and 1993 graduate, was in fact the Original Sparty.

Since graduating from MSU, Russell has never used his engineering degree, but has found great success in business. He is president of Hastings Fiberglass, which makes tools that work on live electrical wires and has contracts worldwide. Among his customers is Detroit Edison.



Dave Russell (Photo: Tresa Baldas)

Corporate duties aside, Russell still gets to work the sidelines at Spartan Stadium. He's the MSU liason, or host, for the officials during football games. He credits this gig to the late, legendary MSU basketball coach Jud Heathcote, whom he met by accident while traveling on spring break.

Russell's flight had a layover in Dayton, Ohio, where he ran into Heathcote at the airport. The two sat and talked. Heathcote took a liking to him and told him to see him in his office when classes resumed. Heathcote put Russell in charge of ticketing for Spartan Spirits, which is now the Izzone, and selected him to start traveling with the basketball team.

Over time, Russell got connected in the athletic department, which ultimately led to Sparty.

"Jud changed my life," Russell said.

"When I was in the Sparty costume I didn't realize what a privilege it was to represent Michigan State," he said.

"Now, I realize what a privilege and blessing it was — and is — on my life. I'm very lucky."

Follow Tresa Baldas on Twitter [@TBaldas](https://twitter.com/TBaldas) (<https://twitter.com/TBaldas>)

Secret identity of MSU's Original Sparty finally revealed after 30 years

Tresa Baldas, Detroit Free Press Published 6:05 a.m. ET April 9, 2019 | Updated 12:16 p.m. ET April 9, 2019

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"They knew. I was at every game," he noted, laughing. "Throughout the whole year we never told anybody outside of us. It was great. Nobody really knew but us."

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Sparty first appeared in 1955 at Jenison Field House as a 6-foot-tall, 60-plus pound papier-mache head, designed by three Theta Xi fraternity brothers.

By the 1956 Rose Bowl Game, the papier-mache head was replaced by a fiberglass version that was 30 pounds lighter. Three decades later, the full-body Sparty emerged.

And since then, Sparty has earned bragging rights. He has been voted the best Big Ten mascot by ESPN, crowned the national champion mascot three times by the Universal Cheer Association, and named the "Buffest Mascot" by Muscle and Fitness Magazine.

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Note: This story has been updated to include more historical facts about Sparty.

Contact Tresa Baldas: tbaldas@freepress.com



State News

October 4,
1967

by Humphrey Bogart and Fredric
March in the original motion
picture about three escaped con-

No new leads on lost Sparty

No leads have been turned up
in the disappearance of Sparty,
who was kidnaped from Sigma
Phi Epsilon fraternity Monday
morning.

He is described as being five
feet tall, wears a green helmet
with green and white plumes, has
a big nose and weighs 45 pounds.

Sparty has been the mascot at
all home football games for the
past ten years and the Sig Eps
are anxious to get him back in
time for Saturday's game.

Anyone who has seen Sparty
or knows of his whereabouts
should contact either the East
Lansing police or the fraternity
house.

