Forty Years of School Spirit: The Golden Eagle

Today’s JBU fans and students alike are used to seeing a human-sized eagle in a basketball jersey goofing off in the Sells Gym. For over forty years, different versions of this character have evoked joy and school spirit at JBU sports events.

The first mascot was created in the fall of 1965 by a home economics major. At this time, the Golden Eagles had been competing in intercollegiate athletics for nine years. Jan Dobbs’ simple costume, pictured below, consisted of a female eagle’s head worn over a plain dress. Though her piece was not as realistic as later mascots, she used it to help the cheerleading squad bolster fan support for JBU athletics.

For nearly thirty years after Jan’s departure, there was no manifestation of a Golden Eagle at sports games. It wasn’t until November of 1991 that the first official JBU mascot performed with the cheerleading squad at the Toilet Paper Game. At halftime, it was announced that this new male bird was to be called “Conan the Eagle.” The identity of the student behind the mask was never publicly released, and the Athletics Department continued to enforce the anonymity of the mascot until recent years.

The Eagle has undergone numerous makeovers in the 15 years since its reappearance. The 1991 mascot’s costume was still quite simple, consisting of a “Golden Eagles’ Basketball” sweatshirt, an Eagles’ cap, and an undignified fake head with bulging eyes and a tongue hanging out of its beak [see back page for image]. When JBU Athletics gave its logos a facelift for the 2001 season, the Eagle transformed into a fully-costumed, blue and white individual, complete with a screen hiding the student behind the mask. Around the same time, the renamed “Regal the Eagle” received the honor of sporting a JBU basketball jersey. In the fall of ’06, Regal was given a second makeover to become a more realistic brown and white raptor.

The mascot’s load hasn’t become any easier with time. While he no longer performs stunts with the cheerleading squad, which was disbanded in the spring of 2006, each home basketball game sees the Eagle determinedly dancing the time away, handing out free t-shirts, and keeping JBU morale high.

November 1963: The Home Ec. department received new kitchen facilities in what is now the Admissions building. While the food laboratory was given kitchenettes, ranges, and a gas stove, the kitchen was trimmed in turquoise and white, and the living room was redecorated in “attractively planned” green and yellow.

November 1971: A contract is signed with the Tulsa Rig, Reel, and Manufacturing Co. for the construction of the Mabee Center. Soon after, the job supervisor died, causing delays in construction. At Homecoming in the spring of 1973, over 1500 people showed up for the building’s dedication.
Insights

From the works of John Brown, Sr.

As I dictate this eighth message in this group of meditations on "The Why of Suffering," my mind runs back to those first days and those first nights when, at the hospital yonder in that western city, our daughter lay face to face with death. In the sorrow of it and the shock of it, there had come to my family a group of people who were at the hospital because they too were passing through deep waters, and in a way probably more sacred and more noble and more beautiful than the average person can understand, there was a fellowship in that suffering that revealed a depth of devotion and tender solicitation that could have never been known except in hours like that and in circumstances like that. My family all but actually spent hours in telling me of their experiences in these new friendships, and how as the long nights dragged their weary way, they came to look forward in joyful expectation to the coming of certain people who at certain hours, almost as regularly as a clock, made their appearance in this house of sorrow, and yet a house of sanctified and glorified suffering. Some of these experiences were heartbreaking; some were laughable; all were beautiful!

Throughout that hospital moved nurses and attendants and doctors - not as unsympathetic, calloused, unfearing human machines, but in most instances with a touch of affection and tenderness that made the service rendered a service that somehow could not be defined and certainly could not be measured. I am not so sure that in its sense alone sickness does not have its compensations - in the fact that at the bedside of suffering, men and women find themselves and find each other; and often, thank God, find God!

Excerpt from The Why of Suffering

The changing face of the Golden Eagle, clockwise from above:
Conan's "inner self" is visible peering out from his beak as he high-fives a fan in the fall of 1991; Regal claps for the cheerleaders' performance in the Sells Gym during the 2001 season; Regal celebrates his most recent makeover with friends in the fall of 2006.

The rumors passing around campus are true. There will be classes on the Friday following Thanksgiving next semester. [...]

[The vice president for academic affairs, Richard] Ruble, admitted that the proposed schedule for the 1981-1982 school year had that Friday as a holiday, but he changed it when he found out something.

"I read an article that noted that most colleges had a 16 week semester - 15 weeks of classes and one of exams," Ruble said, "and in the fall semester we were planning on 14 weeks and two days of classes, which is three days short."

Since the school is being examined in October by the North Central Association on its accreditation, Ruble said it would not be easy to justify that short a first semester.

"It was a complex decision, but we had to get three more days of classes in," he admitted.

Since there was no way to move Christmas break forward in 1981, Ruble said they had to find three days after the start of school, because starting school earlier than Aug. 31 was not acceptable either.

The first day was gained by having only one day of registration for the Fall semester. Freshmen will go through pre-registration during orientation the weekend before.

The second day added was the day after Thanksgiving. Ruble noted that there was no way to "nail the students to the floor" to get them to go to class, but that if they went home for the weekend, all they would miss would be one day of class work.

The other day was gained by scheduling one day of class on a Saturday. Ruble said the decision has been made and the administration is planning on sticking to the calendar as published. However, he noted that the '82-'83 calendar will be drawn up in the fall of '81 and the student input will be solicited then. The only reason the student government was not involved in the decision was that the changes were made after school had ended, Ruble said.