

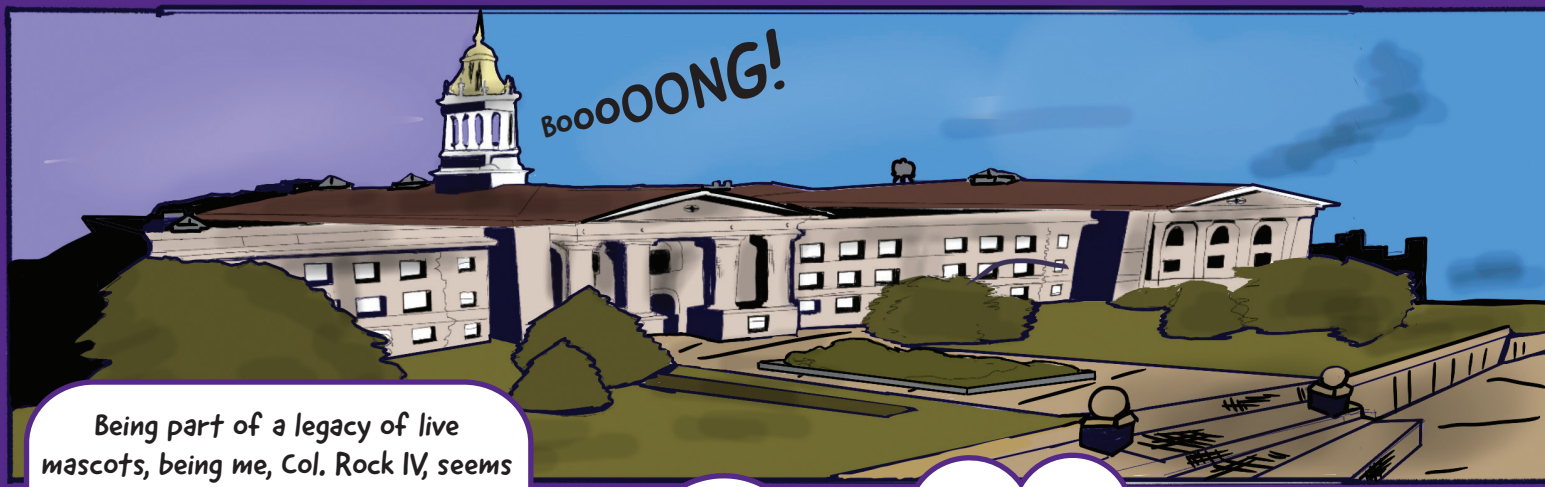


FALL 2023

WIU 99¢

COL. ROCK & THE FIGHTING LEATHERNECKS[®]





Being part of a legacy of live mascots, being me, Col. Rock IV, seems like a dream come true for any dog. The treats and belly rubs...



But it takes hard work to represent the purple and gold. Being a mascot is a full-time job. Sometimes I don't want to be a Leatherneck. I just want to be a "normal" dog.



By the way, you can call me Ray for short. It's the name of some history-making guy here at WIU.



Graduation is happening soon. I need a quick doggy nap.



Who are you?

"Hey there, pup," said some lady I have never seen or sniffed before.

I feel like I'm in some dream, but I can't place where I am.



I'm Mary Jarvis, think of me as the ghost of Western past, present, and future...BOO!



You don't scare me! Wait... Can you understand me?



Of course, I can understand you, Ray. I'm here to show you why the world needs Leathernecks like you. Come along; we don't have much time. Leathernecks have made a mark in history. What does it mean to be a Leatherneck? Maybe we should start with the man who got us that name.

I know what you mean!
That's who I'm named after!
Raymond "Rock" Hanson was
a WWI & WWII hero.



That explains why
there is a statue of him
on campus. It's right
next to my favorite
patch of grass.



Didn't Hanson win
medals for saving a
fellow Marine's life
during WWI?



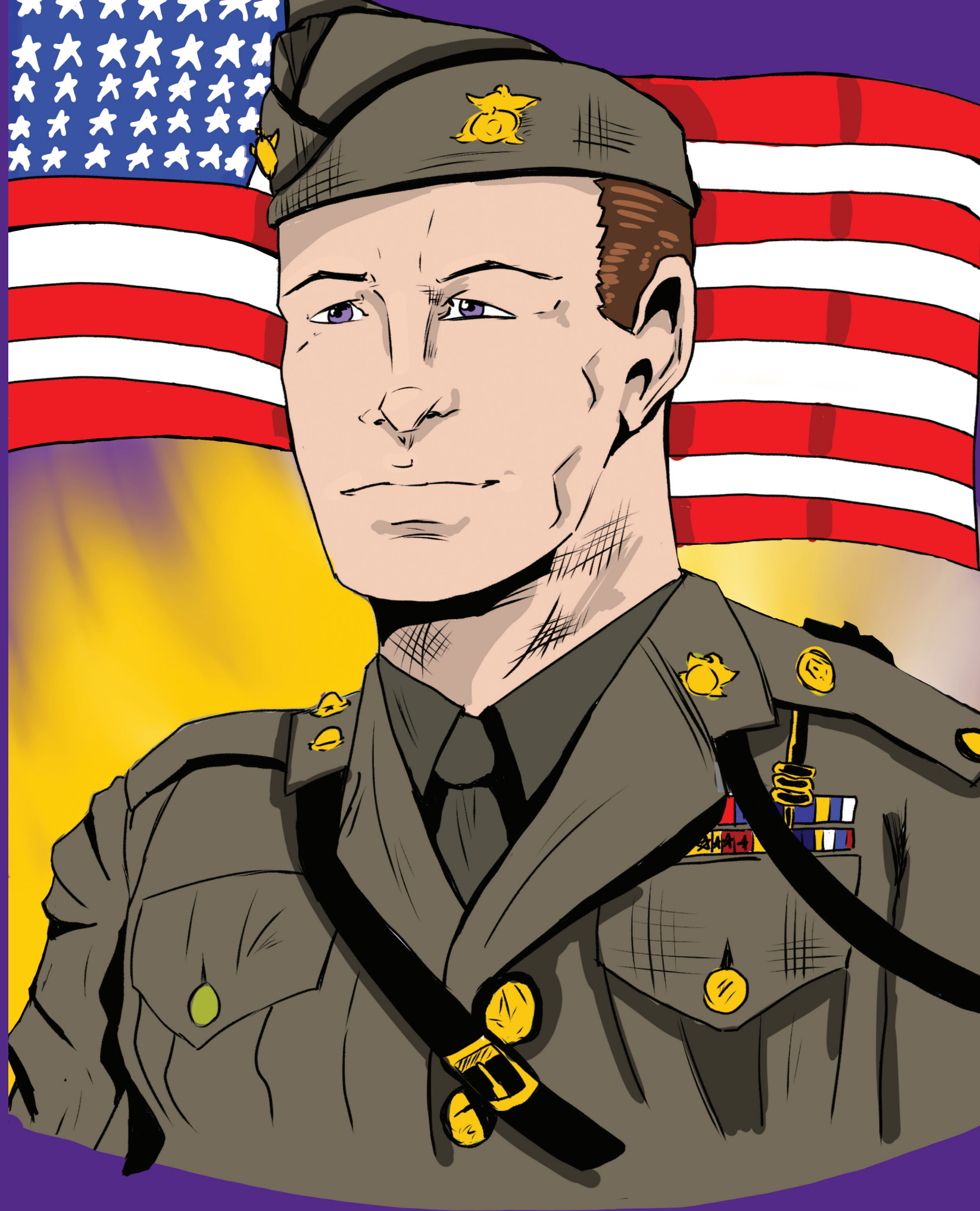
And I know he was a
legendary coach at
Western.



You are right, Ray.
He is the one who was
granted permission by the
U.S. Navy, based on his status
as a Marine hero, to use a
Marine term for his team,
"The Fighting Leathernecks."

WIU is the only non-military
school with a nickname derived
from an armed forces unit.

Rock Hanson

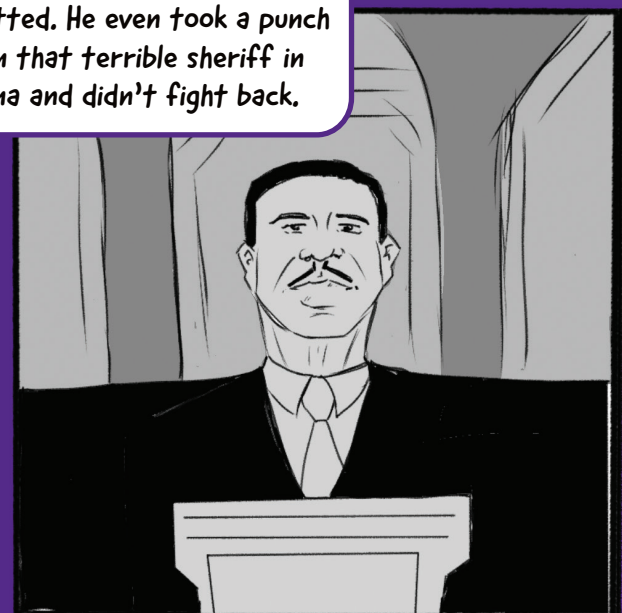




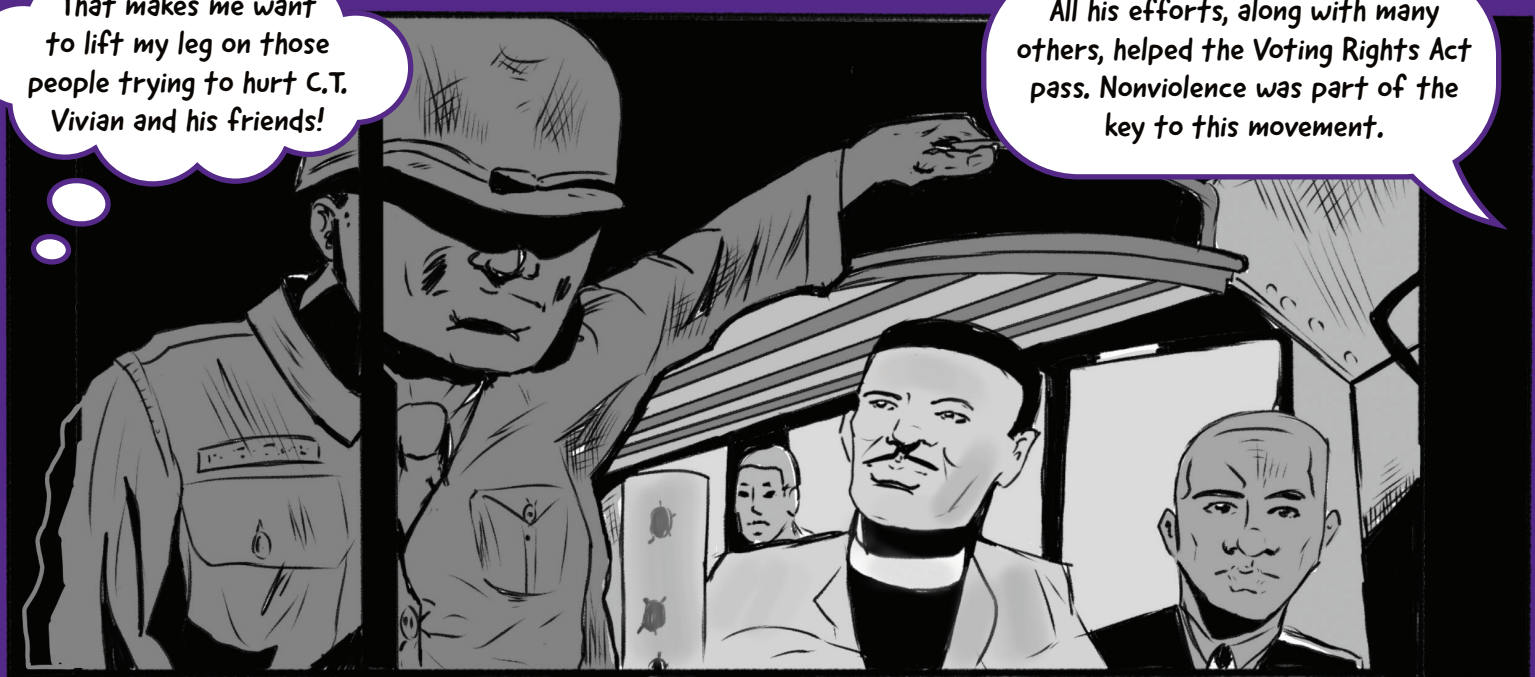
He's not the only interesting person to attend Western. This mural depicts a local Leatherneck, the Rev. C.T. Vivian.



After attending WIU, he joined forces with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement.



He marched, organized, and boycotted. He even took a punch from that terrible sheriff in Selma and didn't fight back.



That makes me want to lift my leg on those people trying to hurt C.T. Vivian and his friends!

All his efforts, along with many others, helped the Voting Rights Act pass. Nonviolence was part of the key to this movement.

Can ghosts read minds? It's best to follow their lead and let these words from C.T. Vivian sink in.
"You can turn your back on me, but you cannot turn your back on the idea of justice."
We Leathernecks don't turn our backs on each other. We stand together and stand up for what matters.





Hey, Ray, how about a game of catch, while I tell you about a more recent WIU graduate?



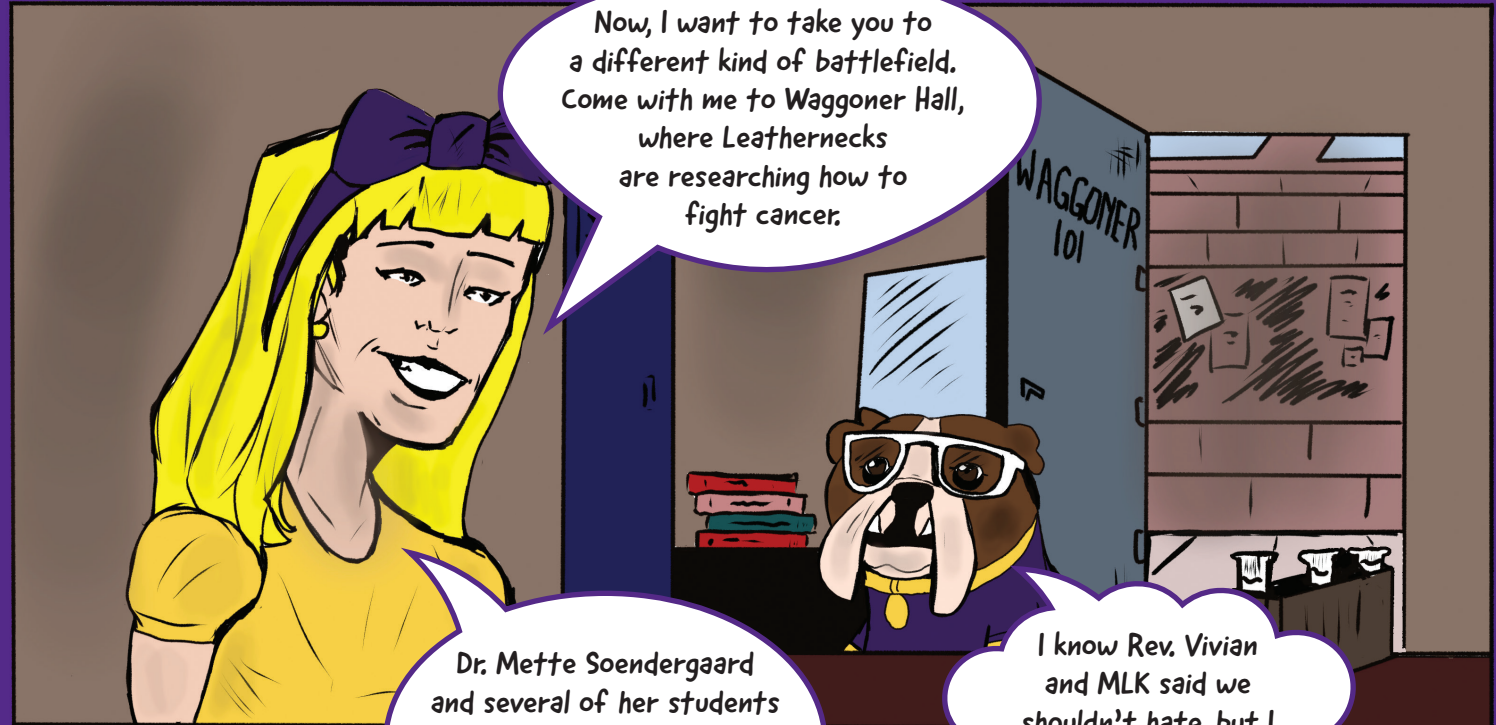
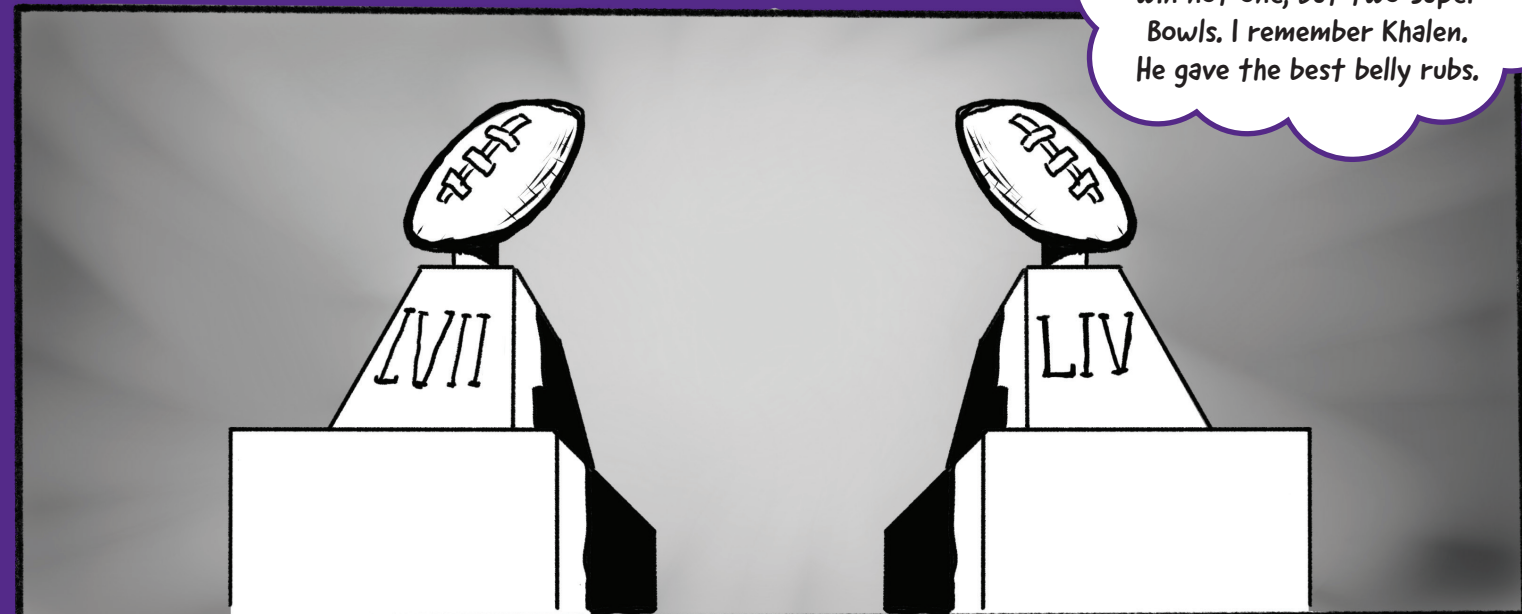
I'll try and stay focused on this next story, Mary. But remember, I'm a pup, and I can't control myself around footballs, tennis balls, or baseballs.



What if I told you Leathernecks dream big, like going to the Super Bowl?

Oh, I know this one. Khalen Saunders played for WIU all four years of his undergraduate program. After graduating, he was drafted into the NFL.

He helped the Kansas City Chiefs win not one, but two Super Bowls. I remember Khalen. He gave the best belly rubs.



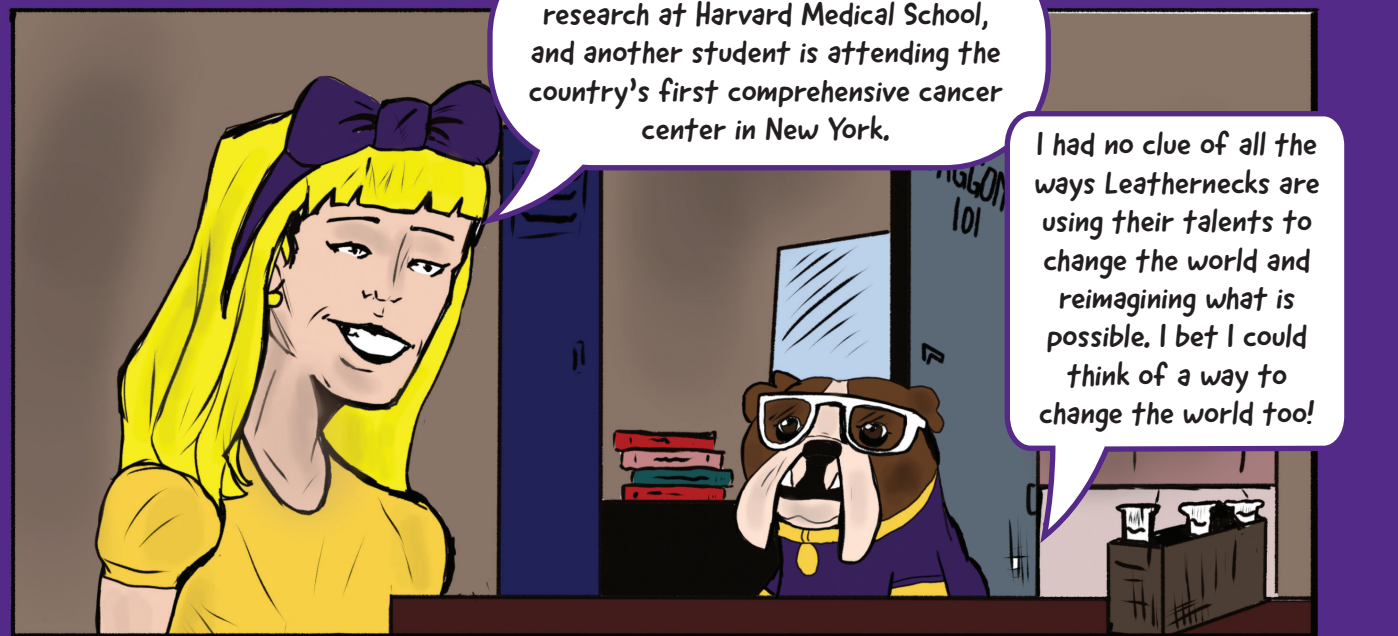
Now, I want to take you to a different kind of battlefield. Come with me to Waggoner Hall, where Leathernecks are researching how to fight cancer.

Dr. Mette Soendergaard and several of her students are using technology to find new ways to detect and diagnose various cancers.

I know Rev. Vivian and MLK said we shouldn't hate, but I do hate cancer.



One student is even continuing his research at Harvard Medical School, and another student is attending the country's first comprehensive cancer center in New York.



I had no clue of all the ways Leathernecks are using their talents to change the world and reimagining what is possible. I bet I could think of a way to change the world too!

Without Leathernecks, the world would be a different place.

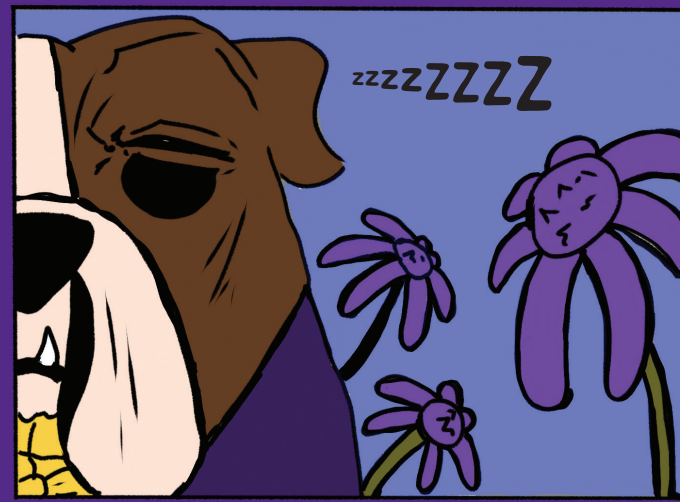
Did you accomplish your dreams at Western?

Why yes, I did. I was inspired by the surrounding vast golden prairies strewn with purple cone flowers, and I suggested the color combination for a schoolwide contest and won!

Wait, you are the reason we are the purple and gold? That is amazing! I've been talking to a legend!

Well, yes, 150 years give or take, as the years have passed by, I have found the colors even more fitting. Gold is so regal, and purple always stands out in a crowd. Just like Leathernecks do.

This makes you pretty old right?

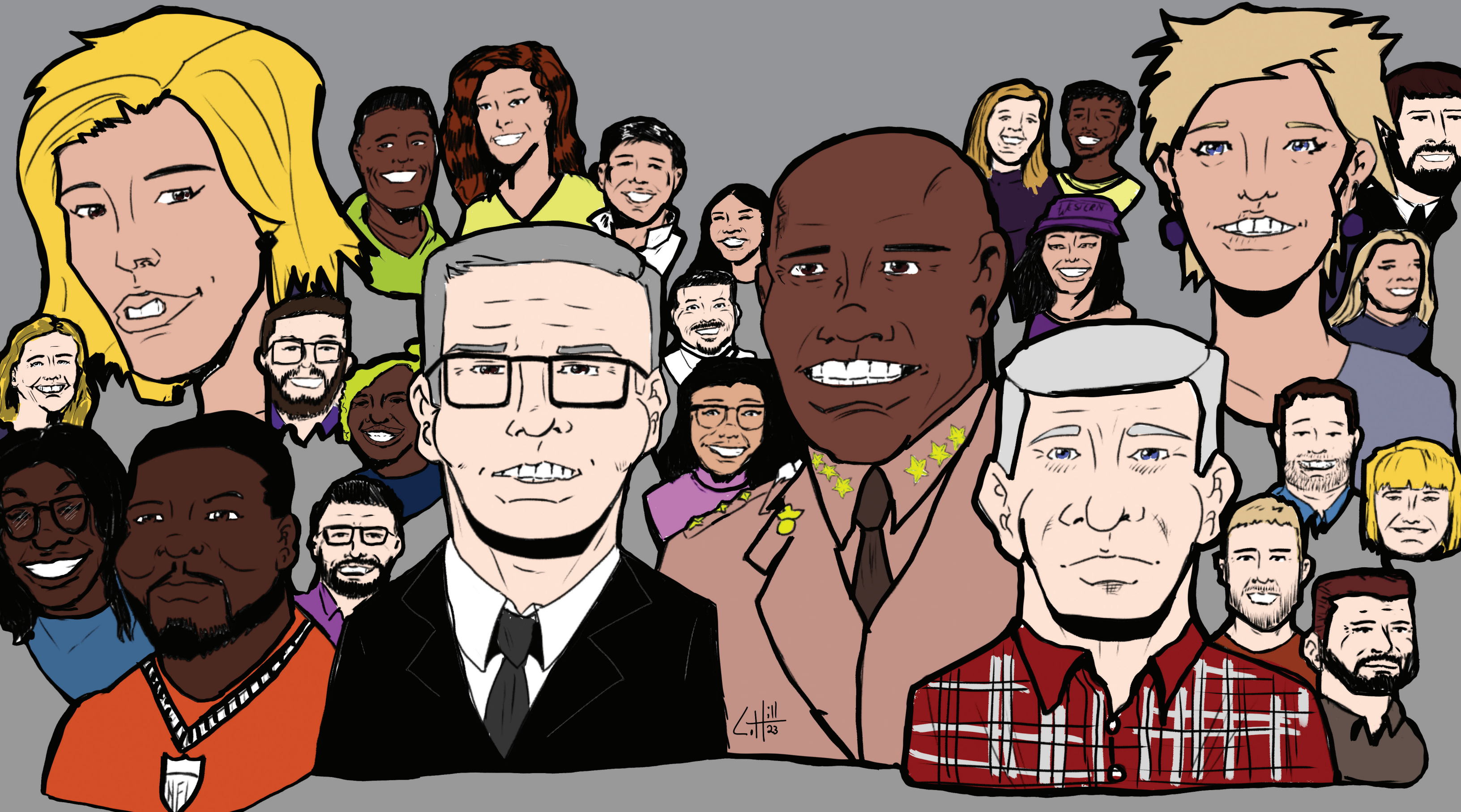


We, as Leathernecks, become the heroes of our own stories, and work hard to conquer what is possible to achieve our dreams.



There they are, Class of 2028.
I wonder what these graduates will accomplish?

The world needs more Leathernecks like me and like you!



It starts
here!



Be the hero of
your WU story!

BOOOOONG!

4/13

Western Illinois student, Conner Hill, is the artist responsible for bringing our beloved Col. Rock IV and Fighting Leathernecks to life in a unique and captivating comic book.

A History major, Hill has a passion for storytelling through art and a deep love for WIU. Hill first received his inspiration for comic books and illustrations from the Sandman Series by Neil Gaiman.

This comic book not only showcases the artistic abilities of Hill, but also serves as a testament to the vibrant and talented individuals who make up our WIU family.

Hill aspires to become a teacher in the future and use his artistic talents to inspire his students. He is just one example of how Leathernecks can gain real-life experiences for their future, both inside and outside the classroom.



More on our amazing Leathernecks at wiu.edu/outcomes.



**Western Illinois
University**

Your potential. Our purpose.