

History of Colonel Rock

In 1958 President A.L. Knoblauch decided to get a mascot for WIU. At the same time my parents were interested in getting a dog for my brother and I. My father was Director of the Counseling Center at WIU and volunteered to take the dog as a family dog and as the mascot of the University. The mascot was a bulldog puppy and was named Colonel Rock. The name came from Rock Hanson, the long time football coach at the University. Colonel came from his rank in the Marines, and Rock through his connection as an Assistant Coach with Knute Rockne. The Leathernecks team name and the use of a bulldog as mascot both came through Rock Hanson's connections with the Marines. Rock Hanson and Colonel Rock met each other many times at events on campus.



To us, Colonel was just the family dog. Cheerleaders would come on Saturdays to get him before games and then return him to us after. He was a great dog to have growing up. He loved to play ball and to "fight" with my dad when we got out special gloves to wrestle with Colonel. He had no problem being

Colonel Rock as puppy



surrounded by large crowds, bright lights or loud noises but was terrified of brooms. We could lay a broom across the floor and he would refuse to cross over it to get somewhere. His love of playing balls eventually got him banned from basketball games. Apparently, during one game the ball was headed out of bounds near where he was standing with the cheerleaders and he decided to play with the ball. He and the other team's player met near the ball, but Colonel won, getting the ball but also getting banned from future basketball games.

Colonel served as the mascot for WIU from 1958 until 1966, when he passed away due to cancer. He was a great family dog and we loved seeing him have a great time at games or standing on a float during a homecoming parade, making people happy. He got along well with everyone and the cheerleaders often commented about how easy he was to handle - well, except for the one basketball incident!

It is interesting that he was never referred to as "Rocky" during that time. He was always called Colonel. Rocky must have come about later with one of the later mascots. I am glad WIU has kept the tradition of having an actual bulldog as a mascot to represent the Leathernecks.





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