

The First Mascot of
Youngstown College . . .

PETE PENGUIN

Youngstown College presents - "Pete" Penguin, 1939 version of the newest thing in college mascots.

Pete Penguin was a well-known name in Youngstown College circles long before the bird actually made his game-stopping appearance at the Westminster-Youngstown homecoming game November 18, 1939.

The story of Pete would not be complete without an account of the beginning of the nickname. For an explanation of its origin we must go to Dr. Castle W. Foard, instigator and hard-working sponsor of many of the college sports activities. Since 1930 mathematics instructor and head of the physics department, Dr. Foard at different times has been basketball coach, tennis coach, athletic director, and planner of the first Youngstown College football schedule and season - in addition to his many other scientific interests and school activities.

Dr. Foard tells how the name "penguin" came to be applied to the college basketball team. It was in 1932 and the cagers had made a long, cold trip to West Liberty State Teachers College in West Virginia. The reception was just as chilly as the trip - the gym and dressing rooms were cold and uncomfortable, the basketball uniforms inadequate. The spectacle of the Youngstown College delegation stamping about the floor, swinging their arms in an attempt to get warm, caused someone to remark that the Youngstowners looked like a bunch of penguins - and it looked like somebody thought they were Arctic visitors, giving them such a cold welcome. Now we can see the resemblance - have you watched Pete, out on the sidelines of a cold, muddy, windswept field, shivering from his little black head to his funny tail, vigorously swinging his flippers?

And so "penguin" became the Youngstown College nickname and for many years basketball as the major intercollegiate sport carried on the tradition. With the advent of intercollegiate football on the campus in 1938, new interest was aroused. It seemed that college colors and college nicknames were just as important as coach or rugged gridgers. Thus began a controversy over an appropriate nickname for the boys who were to carry the fair name of Youngstown down the gridiron.

Ardently the college newspaper, the Jambar, through its editor, Howard Rempes, and campus columnist, Frank Jaczko, carried the banner in defense of "Petey" Penguin, as he had been called in its columns for some time. "Petey" was the pet of co-eds and co-eddies alike in this Jambar school, they said. "Petey's" picture in little thumbnail sketches - wearing a freshman cap, a mortar board, carrying a pennant - had illustrated many editions of the campus newspaper--and, no sir! "Petey" Penguin was not going to be run out of town if Youngstown College students had anything to say about it.

So Petey Penguin remained the college pet and in the fall of 1939 John Chase, Youngstown naturalist and geologist, noticed newspaper announcements which said that Admiral Richard E. Byrd was planning to dispose of several penguins brought back from his last trip to Antarctica and for the past year resting at Penguin Island at the New York World's Fair. Apparently there were plenty of animal lovers ready to take a penguin for a pet, but none of them ready to pay the cost - \$150.00.

The idea of a live penguin as a mascot had been in the minds of President Howard W. Jones of Youngstown College and others interested in the college for sometime, and now President Jones, Mr. Chase, and L. B. Cooksey of the Mahoning Natural Resources Council combined their efforts to secure a penguin, hoping to present him at the second annual homecoming game. The Mahoning Natural Resources Council, through its president, Mr. Cooksey, said that they would provide the money, and Mr. Cooksey agreed to lodge the bird, should one be secured, at temporary quarters at his home. Arrangements would be made by the Park Commissioner, Tommy Pemberton, also much interested in having a penguin mascot, to house Mr. Penguin at one of the parks, preferably the north side Crandall Park, where the swans would have to make room for the strange tuxedo-fitted animal.

After considerable writing, wiring, and telephoning, word was received that a penguin would be shipped immediately and hope was expressed that it would arrive in time for the homecoming game. During the morning and early afternoon hours preceding the game, Mr. Chase and Mr. Cooksey anxiously met all trains arriving in Youngstown from New York - but no penguin. Instructions had arrived, however, telling in great detail how the experts had taken care of penguins. The would-be caretakers read the three pages of instructions and wondered what kind of animal they had acquired - and wouldn't it perhaps have been better to have secured a more conventional and less unique mascot - maybe a Persian kitty or a wire-haired terrier.

The score was 34-0 and Youngstown College fans were deeply interested in the fast-moving third quarter of the homecoming game. Word had been given over the broadcasting system that the penguin, unfortunately, could not be presented to the interested fans that afternoon. Suddenly, two excited expressmen carrying a badly shaken, crated penguin ran into the stadium. Yes, the game was stopped while officials, players, and homecoming crowd got a look at the first mascot of Youngstown College. Apparently spurred on by the interruption, the locals scored two more touchdowns before the final gun, running up a score of 46-0.

Next in the eventful life of our penguin arose such questions as care, handling, and public appearances. At his temporary home with the Cooksey's, Pete Penguin had established his reputation as far as the family pets, a springer spaniel and cat, were concerned - they simply left the room whenever Pete entered after the first encounter.

The instructions which accompanied Pete were varied and detailed. Here is the letter of instructions received from Leo McDonald, manager of Admiral Byrd's Penguin Island at the New York World's Fair:

"If penguins were common, or easy to keep, there would be many more of them in civilization, but they are almost as rare as pandas.

Contrary to popular belief, all penguins are not from the Antarctic. There are only two of the twenty-seven species that live on the ice-covered Antarctic Continent, and neither of these will survive for any length of time in an atmosphere where they can breathe pollutants which cause a growth in their lungs resulting in something similar to tuberculosis, which quickly causes death.

From our own experience, and the experience of those who have handled penguins in various zoos, we give you the following suggestions for their care:

Do not keep your penguin on or near ice. Penguins, like human beings, need sunshine, and they can take a great deal of it without distress.

I quote from instructions by our own expert, Capt. von Suboff:

'When handling penguins, always use gloves and cover the wrists. Keep face as far as possible from birds, their necks can be stretched far, and their motions are swift. Pick the birds up under the flippers from the rear, pointing the head of the bird away from you. Be careful of your suit, as no penguin is house-broke.

'Feed them smooth skin (not scale) fish about four to six inches long. Be sure fish is fresh, not tainted. Feed about twenty to thirty fish a day. When frozen fish are used, they should be completely defrosted before feeding. This can be done by soaking the fish in lukewarm water for about one hour before feeding. Do not feed ice-cold fish. If small fish are not available, scale first and then fillet a large fish. Cut in slices about five or six inches in length and about one-half inch square.

'Give the birds a bath every day for at least a half hour. Water from the faucet (summer temperature) is correct. If the bird shivers when he comes out of the water, the water is too cold. Don't mistake his drying process for shivering. Change the water in the tank or tub every day. In very hot weather, if the bird is in the sun and starts breathing heavily with its mouth open, sprinkle the bird with a fine cool spray.'

I quote from a letter of Dr. Charles R. Schroeder, D. V. M., New York Zoological Park, at present with the San Diego Zoological Society:

'Overloading at a single feeding should be avoided, feed two, preferably three times a day.

'Incorporate a fish-liver oil. Dip one or two fish a

day in cod-liver oil and feed to the birds.

'Avoid draft and chilling. Avoid temperature extremes.

'Feed flat-bellied fish (rounds - sardines or smelts) and feed immediately on thawing. Be sure to get all ice out of frozen fish before feeding.'

I quote from instructions by the New York Aquarium where they have been handling penguins for many years:

'It has been our practice for years to keep our penguins in still water during the winter when running water is too cold for the birds. The water is changed nightly and the pool thoroughly cleaned with strong soap, but during the day such wastes as are deposited on the rockwork are washed off into the body of the standing water.

'When the faucet water reaches a temperature of 50 plus degrees Fahrenheit, our practice is to let the water run in a small stream through the tank.

'The staple diet allowed our birds is of herring strips twice daily, and smelts once daily.

'We have found it advisable, even at the expense of the appearance of the land in the pool, to keep the rockwork as dry as possible for if the birds cannot dry their feet when they come out of the water they tend to develop tubercular feet which usually destroys them. If the land cannot be kept dry, we have found it good practice to take the birds out of the pool altogether for an hour or two and exercise them on dry hard floors.'

Tell handler not to attempt to pet the bird until he is sure of his ground, as the bird's bill is very sharp, and he can cut pretty deep. Tell handler to have iodine always on hand to paint any cut that he gets.

The birds cannot be handled roughly. They are not afraid of human beings, and will therefore peck at anyone trying to get familiar with them. This is sometimes annoying to a handler who gets cut up by the penguin's bill, until he understands how to handle the penguin. Don't let a handler take his peeve out on the bird."

Those who handled Pete after his arrival at Youngstown College found him friendly but not always willing to react according to instructions. For example, he didn't like the warm water prescribed for his bath, but bathed with great pleasure in ice-cold tubs. In many other ways Pete showed originality.

Additional interesting information was received from the New York Aquarium. Quoting from a letter: "The Youngstown College mascot is of the Humboldt breed. Keep his water at 50-53 degrees, have the room about 65-70 degrees. Keep him indoors except in summer. Try to feed him herring fillets in strips 3 to 4 inches long besides the smelts as that is what he liked here. It is good to play with him as penguins are known to get lonesome."

Insurance was an important item for such an expensive mascot, so Pete was insured against "fire, lightning, wind, cyclone, tornado, explosion, theft, burglary, holdup, mysterious disappearance, riots, strikes, transportation hazards," and a good many other things that are not likely to happen to a penguin. The policy issued to Pete indicated that he had to pay an annual premium of \$5.00 for all this protection.

Pete Penguin was duly photographed, made his radio debut over W F M J but would not talk, was chronicled in the Vindicator by columnist Esther Hamilton, taken to church by Coach Dwight "Dike" Beede, and even spent a day at college.

With adequate shelter provided at Crandall Park, Pete was moved from the Cooksey's home. We next hear of Pete "torpedoing the Crandall Park swans." Esther Hamilton writes: "Life on the lake isn't the same any more. Pete is a disturbing influence. He 'dumps' the dignified swans. Down underneath the galaxy of swans strung across the lake like so many battleships on parade, goes Pete. He comes up under a swan and over goes Mr. Swan, heels over head, the most surprised bird you ever saw. Moreover, the swans don't seem to know quite what to do about it. They wait for Pete to dump one of them and then there is a quacking and carrying on such as you never heard. Pete is like the country cousin who comes to town to see his rich relations and doesn't behave properly."

Alarm was expressed by some over the safety of a penguin when placed with swans, but those in the know report that their bets are on Pete who seems well able to fight his own battles - a worthy mascot of Youngstown College.

For additional information, refer
to newspaper scrapbook.

12-6-39