

I Get My Name

Parents are usually the ones to name their kids. Not me. Dad got Ohio Staters, Inc., to organize a campus-wide name-the-mascot contest. The Union department store offered a \$50 gift certificate to the first-place winner. A committee of faculty and students was set up to screen proposed names.

Kerry Reed, of Dublin, Ohio, won with the name Brutus the Buckeye. Rumor has it that other names may have had more support but that my dad favored Brutus and made sure it became

my name. Some students, disgruntled because Brutus meant "heavy," or confused with *Et tu, Brute*, wanted me to be named Bucky Buckeye. How lame would that have been?

Over the years I became Brutus Buckeye, dropping my middle name. Mom still likes to call me by my full name, Brutus the Buckeye.

A New Look

I quickly went from an infant to a toddler. My papier-mâché version was kind of bulky. It was



too heavy for me to be sprinting around on a one-hundred-yard stage with any kind of gusto. I learned that in my debut. I needed to lose some weight. And for sure, I wouldn't be able to travel well, having just a thin skin of newspapers held together by dried-out flour and water.

Dad paid a visit to a local fibreglass foundry. Three days later my evolved self was delivered to Drackett Tower, ready for a coat of paint, the addition of fuzzy cotton movable eyebrows, and a grin that could be turned upside down into a frown. I could now be happy, crafty, sad, or angry.

Cool but Loud

At twenty-two pounds, a lighter, leaner, me was ready for the Dad's Day Iowa game. It was at that game that some of the marching band members started the idea of patting me on the back for good luck. Cool, but loud. Anyway, it worked against Iowa, whom we beat 38-0.

Let me explain the "loud." Fibreglass blocks out the sound of the fans, but hitting me on the shell sounded like the beating of a taiko war drum—from *inside* the drum. The other problem was that my inner self could barely see out of the two eye holes. He could look only forward and down. He could see his feet and the chalk of a sideline,

but he never knew who was beside or behind him. He must have felt half blind.

My popularity was such that within weeks the Athletic Council approved me as the mascot. Not everyone agreed. People in the front rows complained that they couldn't see over me. Others didn't like the fact that I moved slowly. For crying out loud, I was just a youngster.

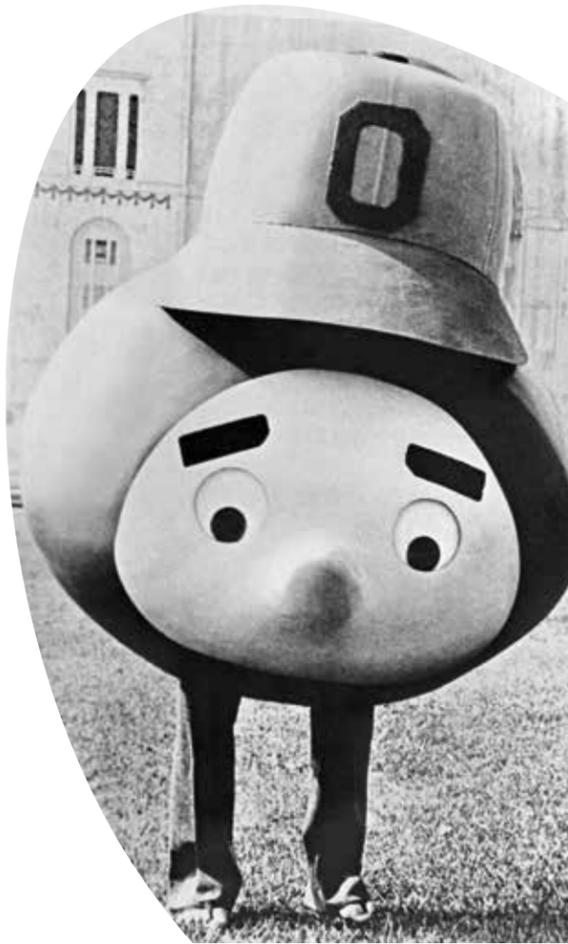
While the cheerleaders babysat me when I was very young, Block "O" started caring for me between games. And they did a great job, although they didn't have a stroller big enough for me, so they had to strap me to the back of a station wagon.

I had to say good-bye to my dad in 1966 and my mom in 1967. They were graduating and going on to their careers, but so was I.



From Mean to Mousey

After the snarling Brutus fiasco, I evolved once again. I lost my white eyebrows to short black ones forever poised in a worried, up-tilted position. I looked kind of cute, I guess, in a mousey sort of way. But I gained too much weight. The bright side was that that because my head could be dissected and shipped separately, I got really good at traveling with the team. The bad part was traveling with the luggage and missing all the fun with the team and cheerleaders. I did not like that.



This version of me gave me a complex.
I looked too worried.

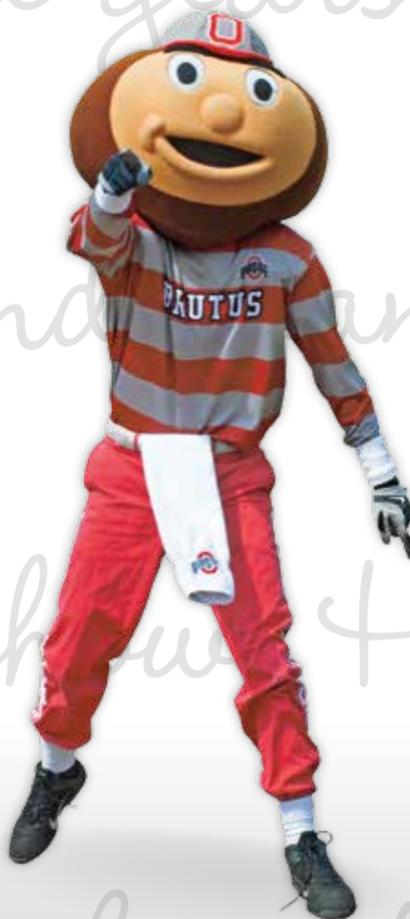


I got my dance skills from my mom, Sally!

Summers heat or winters cold, the seasons pass the years will roll. Time and change will surely show. How firm thy friendship, Ohio.



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Postscript

I'm a simple being. I'm not married. I wear the same things every day: my red and gray long sleeved shirt, red pants, white wrist bands, socks and towel, gloves, high-topped sneakers, and my Woody Hayes baseball cap. I go to work on time. I enjoy what I do. I'm not going to move. I try to keep up with the times. I even tweet.

I've seen a lot of changes in the past fifty years. Women, who in 1965 were a rarity in law, medicine, and MBA programs, now constitute a majority in many graduate schools. Friends who used to have to wait in line to use a dorm or Greek house phone can now call or text their friends instantly. Research that had to be done manually is now available with a click on an iPad or a Mac button. There are no more curfews. Cars are all but gone and bikes are everywhere. The wars against racial, gender, sex, and other discrimination are steadily being won. The times, they are a-changin'.

But what is still the same are the Orton Hall chimes, students lounging on the oval, the quiet magic of Mirror Lake during a snowfall, the marching band playing "Hang on Sloopy," William Oxley Thompson standing steady in the middle of it all, and the ringing words of our alma mater:

*Summers heat or winters cold,
the seasons pass the years
will roll. Time and change
will surely show. How firm thy
friendship, Ohio.*

In the last analysis, in addition to its undisputed, extraordinary success in athletics, the best things Ohio State stands for, to me, are not just seen on its football, lacrosse, and soccer fields; its ice hockey rinks, swimming pools, or baseball diamonds; or its basketball, tennis or gymnastics courts. They are also seen in OSU's classrooms, laboratories, and research facilities where round-the-clock efforts are constantly in progress, aimed at educating and serving humanity and making the world a healthier, safer, and better place.

It is in that context that I am so proud to be playing a role in the spirit of what Ohio State is all about. I love being the face of Ohio State, a part of this incredible, fabulous University.

Thank you all so much.

GO BUCKS!

Love, Brutus