

W. LIFE Raiders of the Lost Art

MASCOT STEALING — yet another dying art in America.

The once time-honored tradition seems to have gone the way of the dodo. And just what really happened to the dodo, anyway?

Swiping a rival school's mascot used to make you a hero — even a legend. Just a little added competition between friendly rivals. No harm done.

But today, school officials aren't so forgiving. Although each season brings renewed threats, it seems increasingly difficult to do the deed without incurring a penalty.

In the most recent high-profile case, former U. of Texas, Austin, student Neil Sheffield paid a hefty price for his doggy tricks.

A determined Sheffield, along with his larcenous posse, "the Texas Rustlers," swiped rival Texas A&M U.'s Aggie mascot, Reveille IV, just before the 1993 Cotton Bowl.

IN-PLAY

To Sheffield's surprise, UT administrators didn't find his prank humorous. Although he returned the dog unharmed, he was disqualified from running in student elections and ultimately pressured into leaving the university.

"This one's going to go down



Well, it's one way to get your sheepskin.

in the history books," UT senior Ashley Callahan says. After the theft, Callahan formed a student organization to raise funds for a statue in Sheffield's honor. "As crazy as Texas politics are, this is the kind of thing that could get you elected."

Snatching a competitor's cow, a rival's rabbit or an adversary's albatross requires a brilliant blend of deception and trickery. By contrast, avoiding such a heist is a credit to the animals' owners and caretakers.

Until Sheffield's theft, Reveille IV was the only Southwest Conference mascot never stolen.

Uga, the U. of Georgia Bulldog, still hasn't been taken. Frank "Sonny" Seiler, a Georgia alumnus, has owned all Ugas since the late 1950s. He says the dogs have been shown nothing but goodwill from home and visiting fans alike.

"Uga has always been treated with respect," Seiler says. "I can't think of anyone anywhere who has threatened or would do harm to our dogs."

Frank Pierz, director of special programs for agriculture and public service at Colorado State U., is responsible for the CSU mascot, Cam the Ram. He says Cam provides his own best defense against theft.

"If it was a parakeet, he'd be easier to steal," Pierz says. "But he weighs about 350 pounds. And can you imagine something that doesn't have horns butting heads with him?"

But in general, Callahan attributes the decline of mascot stealing to stiffer penalties and enhanced security measures.

"It's healthy as long as it's not destructive," Callahan says. "It's a lost art. What happened to Neil — it's detrimental to those of us who appreciate mascot stealing."

Grant J. Heston, U. of Florida/
Illustration by Michael Webb,
U. of North Carolina



It's the thought that counts, right? Right?!

Nifty Thrifty Gifties

YOU SPENT YOUR FINANCIAL aid money months ago.

The echo in your refrigerator rivals that of the Grand Canyon. With the Xs on the calendar inching ominously close to Dec. 25, what are cash-poor students to do?

In a mall-oriented world where even simple cotton T-shirts sport \$19.95 price tags, finding gifts on a college-student budget takes a little ingenuity.

DOLLARS

U. of Florida senior Kristen Olson suggests a candle because the price can be so ambiguous.

"It's a pretty gift," Olson says. "Some candles cost \$30 and some cost \$4, and you'd never know the difference."

The homemade gift is always a popular way to save money and give a little bit of yourself. Cookies, poetry or a heartfelt card will often do the trick. Besides, it's the thought that counts, right?

For many, a specific talent can be turned into a thoughtful gift.

"I'm a photography major, so usually when I'm trying to save money, I give people one of my photographs," says Cinnamon

Cooper, an Ohio State U. senior. Cooper makes her own frames out of colored paper and uses black-and-white film to keep costs low.

But for those whose talents don't lead to inexpensive presents, most college campuses have arts and crafts centers for students to make their own jewelry, ceramics and other crafts.

"During Christmas time, we do silk screenings, and people come in and make cards and T-shirts," says junior Tamara Neff, who works at a UF craft center. "Almost everything that you make here is under \$20."

Brian Hedger, a junior at Michigan State U., says he doesn't fret when the big day is approaching and he's out of cash. "I'm not exactly the most creative person in the world. I don't make stuff. But I've always somehow found a way, whether it be working a couple of weeks before Christmas, or something like that."

Last holiday season, Hedger spent his Christmas break hanging snow gutters on houses to earn some extra dough.

"I had to do some Christmas Eve shopping, but I got some pretty nice stuff."

Tiffini Theisen, U. of Florida



Guest Expert: Torry The Traffic Guy

On Mascot Stealing:
"I'd do it."