



PURDUE Pete HISTORY

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Purdue Pete ran onto the field in the spring of 1956, at the pep rally before the September 29 Purdue-Missouri football game. However, that was not the first time that Purdue students had heard of their new mascot.

Purdue Pete can trace his heritage back to 1940 when University Book Store owners Doc Epple and Red Sammons hired artist Art Evans to create Pete an advertising logo. However, Pete didn't get his name until four years later.



In 1944 the Purdue yearbook, *Debris*, wanted to use Pete on the cover. The editors went to Epple and asked for Petes name. According to one account, Epple out of the blue said "Pete". So the famed Boilermaker was named, and in the 1944 issue of *Debris*, Purdue Pete was everywhere. Pete wouldn't assume a human form for another 4 years after that. The 1948 *Debris* yearbook hosts the first photograph of Purdue Pete.

In 1956 athletic director Guy "Red" Mackey gave the go ahead to create a sports mascot to inspire fans at home football games. Larry Brumbaugh was selected to be the first Pete by the Pep Committee. Brumbaugh was then faced with the task of finding a costume for Pete. "I tried to contact some costume companies, but I didn't even really know what I was looking for," said Brumbaugh. "Finally a woman in my hometown who was artistic with papier-mache made it."



The early costume was made with chicken wire to hold the papier-mache up. "It didn't fit very well." Brumbaugh said. "So you just kind of followed along with the cheerleaders, but you didn't do much moving around." After Brumbaugh graduated, John Note took over the job as Pete. He recalls Pete in a similar fashion, "You were just out there kind of freelancing."

Over the past 54 years, Purdue Pete has undergone many changes, as illustrated by the photos in this section. Pete has endured theft, disrepair and changing styles. Pete evolved from a smallish papier-mache version to a huge fiberglass version that was more harness than head, and finally to a smaller version made of fiberglass as well. Pete's demeanor has changed from the contented grin created for Larry Brumbaugh to a version with a mouth that doubled as eye-holes to an angry-and-furrowed Pete and back to the Pete he is today.

"It's fascinating to see the evolution of Pete through the years." said Dr. Bill Rodkey, a former Pete. "Times have changed and so has Pete."

[More stories and anecdotes](#) from former Petes.

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