

PAINTING THE GOAT by Dick and Jonnie Shawkey (24)

Animal mascots are a common feature on many university campuses. Navy is no exception. Bill the Goat has been a central figure in academy rallies for over 125 years. It all began when a couple of midshipmen were taking a shortcut across a farmer's field on their way to a football game being played on a nearby field. The midshipmen kidnapped the farmer's goat and the rest is history.

It seems natural that at some point in time, a bronze statue of the goat would grace the academy's grounds. It also seems natural that a statue of a rampaging goat would attract the attention of the midshipmen. So, it was at that evening meal in late May 1957, that first classman, O.C. Baker, inspired the plebes at his table to rise to the occasion. "If we have a plebe (1st year midshipman) with the guts to decorate the goat before its presentation ceremony, I'll spoon (recognized) the plebe as a co-equal." O.C. Baker had run my tail into the ground for 9 months. The thought that I no longer would have to "brace up" in his presence was incentive enough.

The night before the goat's formal presentation, around 2 in the morning, I and my two roommates made our way to Macdonough Hall where the goat statue lay waiting under a blue tarp. Gordie Caswell and Jim Prather stood guard while I used the artist's red oil paint I had brought. I had to reach under the tarp and feel around the goat's rear end to find the private parts that were to be "improved". I then squeezed out a portion of paint and smeared it by hand across the goat's private parts. The dirty deed finished, the three of us returned to our room.

The following morning workmen began preparations for the presentation ceremony. On discovering the foul deed, they tried to scrub away the paint. Unfortunately, the goat's bronze finish had absorbed the paint, and the workmen were forced to steam clean the goat's behind. Although the ceremony was delayed by an hour, the presentation proceeded, only when the cloth cover on the goat was dropped it revealed the goat's bright shiny private parts.

Taking their cues from their predecessors, over the years countless plebes were ordered to ensure the goat was properly prepared for major school events. The goat proudly displayed his shiny private parts for all to see until recently when the statue was moved to a guarded site. As for me, O.C. Baker shook my hand and henceforth I was freed from his hazing.