

Sun Devil

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This group and members of other local service clubs joined the ASC "Bulldog Boosters" to form a new support organization.

M.O. Best, a prominent vegetable grower and member of the Arizona Board of Regents, proposed "Sun Angels" to identify the committee.

This combined the popular word describing a patron who backed a Broadway show (angel) and "Valley of the Sun," a favorite phrase for the Phoenix metropolitan area.

The Sun Angels proposed to raise money for everything from rigorous athletic program needs . . . recruiting, scholarships, and facilities. The group was pledged to provide financial support in Phoenix for Arizona State College that had long given to the University of Arizona.

school newspaper on Nov. 14, 1947, replacing the long-standing Bulldog.

The new symbol changed the school's image, but not the losing ways of its football team. In the first game after the name-change election, the "Sun Devils" managed a 13-13 tie with Arizona State College at Flagstaff (now NAU) and went on to lose the final two games of the season to Wichita (34-19) and West Texas State (7-0).

The team also lost its coach, Steve Couthie, who resigned to become a farmer. It was a wise decision. Earlier in the season his team was squashed by the University of Arizona (67-0) and Nevada-Reno (74-2).

However, the new mascot was due to experience better times. Ed Doherty, an assistant coach at Boston College, was hired Feb. 7, 1947, to coach the new Sun Devils.

The poised and confident Doherty, who quarterbacked Frank Leahy's great Boston College teams, convinced some of Arizona's top high school backs to enter ASC. The prize catch was Wilford "Whizzer" White who was to earn second team AP All-America honors as a senior.

Before the ink dried on the Sun Devil logo, students devised a maroon and gold costume including a fork and devil head-piece. Gymnast Dick Jacobs was the first to wear it at football games.

He performed gymnastic stunts, speared the opposition, and raced into the stands to arouse the cheering section. The personified Sun Devil quickly became an ASC tradition.

The Sun Devil was secure until 1971 when a drive was launched to change the little devil into a more macho symbol. Some felt the Sun Devil was more of an imp than a personification of Satan, and was a wimpy imp at that.



This is the design that challenged the original Sun Devil and was defeated by students and alumni in 1972.

The results reflected alumni sentiment. During the campaign, the president and other university officials received hundreds of letters, most of them pleading the Sun Imp's case. Some were bitter, others sarcastic and a few were outraged:

"I was awestruck to see the selection possibilities. What amazes me is how you persuaded my wife's hairdresser to pose for selection No. 2."

"You're must be kidding! I don't know who the steering committee is but they must have a taste for garbage or there were only three to choose from."

"Who are the fools responsible for this nonsense? You've received your last penny from me."

"Our Sun Devil is an imp dedicated to vexing enemies; jovial and cunning in his reckless abandon; but not designed to project the symbolism of Satan himself or the qualities he possesses."

Interestingly, the Sun Devil logo was slightly changed from the original without an election or a whimper from anyone. In the late 1960s, a "different" devil appeared on stationary and other items.

An ASU staff artist had altered the original because he did not like the encircling sunburst ring of fire. The altered design found its way into various brochures and other publications.

In 1976, Allen Frazier, coordinator of Associated Students of ASU, discussed the altered logo with Al Camasto, graphic design specialist at University Publications. He agreed to purge the unauthorized design from the file and substitute the original sunburst Sun Devil.



One of several designs proposed to replace the 1946 Sun Devil.

One afternoon in the late summer of 1946, several Sun Devils met at the home of Arthur E. Burgher Jr., the organization's first president.

They felt that ASC needed a new image — one that would be unique and bring notoriety to the Tempe campus. After all, several universities including Georgia, Yale, and Wake, were known as "Bulldogs." Many high schools throughout the country were "Bulldogs" too.

Milton Sanders suggested "Devil Dogs," a combination of "Dust Devil," the familiar desert whirlwind, and the existing "Bulldogs."

During the conversation, Burgher mentioned that Duke University used the name "Blue Devils." As the debate raged, the two suggestions were merged into "Sun Devils."

The name captured the student body's attention. The Sigma Phi fraternity actively promoted the name change.



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In the spring of 1971, the student body voted 1207-331 to sink the imp and bring a Viking-faced model to the surface.

However, many alumni and members of the public were outraged. University president Harry Newburn appointed a committee composed of students, alumni, and others to make a recommendation regarding a new emblem.

The committee suggested a design contest. The finalist would face the imp in a run-off. The little fellow with the fork prevailed in the March 22, 1972, election 11,122 to 3,141.

(The students had nearly voted the challenger in with 1,617 favoring the imp and 1,518 choosing the macho devil. Alumni voted overwhelmingly for the little devil, 9,505-1,623.)



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Finally, a special student election was held Nov. 8, 1946. The final count was 816 for the "Sun Devils," with 196 sticking with "Bulldogs."

However, some problems arose. For years, the ASC football team ran onto the gridiron growling. No one knew what a Sun Devil sounded like.

Also, no one had a concept of what a Sun Devil looked like.

Phoenix attorney Walter E. Craig contacted his friend and former schoolmate, Berk Anthony, who was an artist employed by Walt Disney Studios.

Anthony, who created the Stanford Indian symbol, designed the Sun Devil free of charge. The logo was used in a print for the first time in an ad for Bright's Style Shop on the Sept. 26, 1947, *State Press*.

The logo made its appearance on the masthead of the



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When the dust of the logo election had settled, Frank Gianelli, *Arizona Republic* sports columnist observed in his column of April 18, 1972:

"After all, an imp is an imp. It doesn't take a course in geometric doodling to figure out what is depicted by the sausage-bodied red-hot with the horns and tines.

"The Sun Imp has prevailed in the insignia balloting and old hearts can go back to ticking with just normal murmurs, not the rampant racing concern over 'what are those young whelps up to now?'"

Again the debate is surfacing. Is the little imp too much of a symbol of our Satanic times?

Or, is he, as one *Webster's Dictionary* definition explains: "Devil . . . one of notably dashing spirit."