



The Legend of the L-Cat

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Legendary Lake Mills is a town that lives up to its aptly given moniker.

From our pyramids beneath the dark waters of Rock Lake, to our mystical Aztalan State Park, to our storied tales of legendary residents, Lake Mills abounds with mystery and enchantment.

We are often asked “What IS an L-Cat?” Does the “L” stand for Lake Mills? Is it an intriguing name for a mythical creature of strength and pride? Is it short for “Hellcat”?

After conducting interviews, reviewing school records, and being encouraged to embellish a bit, here is the 2017 update to the supposedly well-known Legend of the L-Cat.

The Legend of the L-Cat goes back a long, long time ago...long before many of us were born. It was the fall of 1944. World War II raged across the globe.

High Schools across the country looked for small ways to engage students at school while their attention, family members, and friends were so far from home. It was a time of solidarity and sacrifice but also a time of great uncertainty.

One way to focus and unite students at the local level was to choose a mascot for their high school. Schools throughout the area were racing to choose the mightiest of mascots and Lake Mills was no exception.

On a crisp autumn afternoon, the high school students were asked to report to the Common Room to select a mascot for Lake Mills.

Students were encouraged to create a mascot that embodied the values of the athletic program: power, strength, skill, perseverance, determination, and pride.

Enthusiastic students offered up countless ideas, spirited discussions could be heard, and zealous groups lobbied for their perfect mascot.

Many ideas were placed on the chalkboard. The “Bears” and the “Tigers” appeared to be the most popular.

The “Bears” is rumored to have been a reference to the fabled bear kept in a pit outside the Fargo Mansion, but that is another story.

Unknown to the adults, a small group of senior boys was pulling students aside lobbying for another name: L-Cat.

The powerful group wanted to create a mythical creature that would secretly bring to mind the popular image of the “Hell Cat”.

The Hell Cat was a World War II Grumman F6F fighter plane that was known for its speed, power, ruggedness, and domination. The “Hell Cats” were the renowned heroes who flew these aircrafts and had alleged ties to Lake Mills.

The students knew that they would never be allowed to have “hell” as part of their mascot name.

This was a time when saying “shut up” was cause for discipline and “hell” was deemed language most profane. Their clever twist eluded the adults’ attention.

When the votes were tallied by the same student leaders, “bears” won the popular vote, but L-Cat was reported as the winner.

Some say that it actually became “The Mighty L-Cats” for the few who dared to hijack the vote.

Margaret Mead’s famous words sum up the subversive actions of the students on that day: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Perhaps they didn’t change the world, but this small group did change both the perceived history and a piece of a rapidly approaching future for Legendary Lake Mills.

While working to add to a local legend of their time, these students inadvertently created one of their own. One that we still tell a version of to this day.

The image of the Lake Mills L-Cat has been designed and redesigned through the years, but the spirit of the L-Cat, the honor, pride, strength, domination, and the creativity, has never diminished.

From its legendary creation to its legendary traditions, our beloved L-Cat continues to represent the very best of the Lake Mills Community and will continue to for generations to come. Go L-Cats!

Note from the 1945 Lambda Mu (yearbook): "...our graduates in service sent a new mascot to Lambdu Mu. The crate was labeled 'L. Kat', so L. Kat he is." Sadly, no reference to Mr. L. Kat with a "K" was seen again. The original drawing of the L-Cat was designed by Ms. Kathryn Lindberg Gericke.