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Flashback Photo of the Week

Posted by Sasha at 1:33 AM ET

This week's photo also comes with a story:

The Honey Bears

Roy Taylor

BearsHistory.com

In the 21st Century, youngsters growing up watching the Chicago Bears, as I and thousands of other youths did, will remember many high-tech features of the game-day experience at Soldier Field. Pregame pyrotechnics, the giant Bear head in the North endzone, the new Shake the Lake song, and impressive video presentations on the scoreboards. For this fan who watched the Bears at the aging old Soldier Field, there were just two forms of entertainment to remember: the Honey Bears cheerleaders and Rocky, the "mascot in the crowd."

Just prior to Super Bowl 20 in New Orleans, founder/manager/coreographer Cathy Core was informed by Bears management that her group's contract would not be renewed to take the field for their 10th year at Soldier Field. The actual background thinking for this choice has not been revealed publicly, but the semi-official reason given by the Bears organization is that they felt cheerleaders were not an acceptable part of the gameday experience for an NFL team.

This is truly a shame, as the Honey Bears remain an enduring memory of Chicago Bears games in a simpler time for this lifelong fan.

I interviewed Core for my book *Chicago Bears History* in 2004, and I am thankful for the time she spent talking to me. According to Core, George Halas himself decided that he wanted his team to have cheerleaders, or "dancing girls" as he called them in his own words. Halas put General Manager Jim Finks in charge of making just that happen, sometime in 1976.

Core had recently moved to the Chicago area from New Jersey, and had actually never driven into the city as of this time. Core's cheerleading experience at that time consisted of having taught Junior High girls. Someone in Core's church, however, knew Finks, and recommended Core to him as a person that may possibly assemble a new cheerleading unit. When Finks first called Core and identified himself as General Manager of the Bears, Core thought it was a friend playing a joke on her, and she eventually hung up. Finks then had the mutual acquaintance call Core and validate his story, and when Finks called back, Core sheepishly apologized. Before she knew it, she was meeting with Halas in the Bears' downtown offices, talking about the group that would be known as the Honey Bears.

Before Core left the office that day, Halas told her "as long as I'm alive, we will have dancing girls on the sidelines."



Core began traveling to places such as Dallas and Denver to interview those clubs about the process of putting together a cheerleading unit, then interviewed hundreds of women before narrowing down the applicants to the first group of 20.

The Honey Bears danced on the sidelines, as well as made appearances around the city, from 1977 to 1985. Halas made good on his word that the cheerleaders would always be a part of the team as long as he was alive. He passed in October of 1983. The following season the team attempted to end the relationship, but had a binding contract with the group through the end of the '85 season. Following their appearance at the Super Bowl in New Orleans, the group became a memory. Word has it that as long as the McCaskey family owns the team, that's where the Honey Bears will remain, a memory.

Core remains ready to resurrect them at any time.